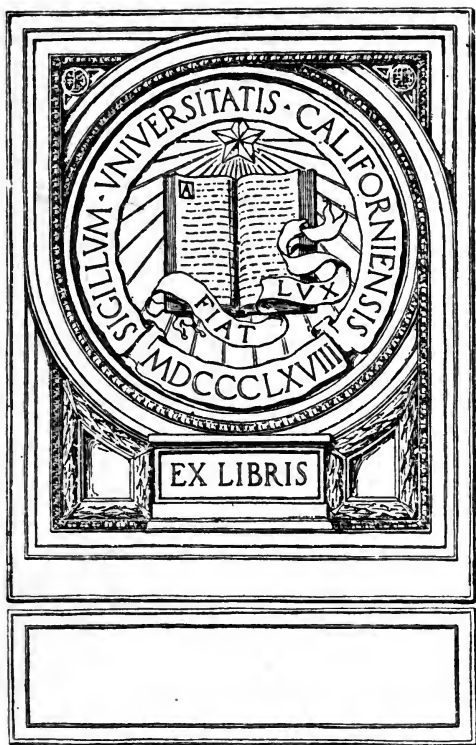


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THE OLD RÉGIME.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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OLD PARIS: *Its Court and Literary Salons.*

THE OLD RÉGIME: *Court, Salons and Theatres.*

THE  
OLD RÉGIME

*COURT, SALONS, AND THEATRES*

BY

CATHERINE CHARLOTTE, LADY JACKSON



NEW YORK  
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY  
1898

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“Le dixseptième siècle fut l'époque du génie et des œuvres d'imagination ; le dixhuitième fut celle du doute, des recherches et des sciences exactes.”

“Aux élans de l'imagination succède l'émulation du savoir, et le bel-esprit remplace le génie. L'orgueil humain met en doute tout ce qu'il ne comprend pas, et le siècle savant devient sceptique.”

DE TOCQUEVILLE.

“Il est des époques où la société ressemble au festin de Balthazar. Elle s'enivre jusqu'au reveil terrible, fatal comme les lettres de feu sur les murs d'airain.”

CAPEFIGUE.



7.8.

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

# THE OLD RÉGIME.

## COURT, SALONS, AND THEATRES.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

A FEELING of joy thrills through every pulse in the nation. The French people are aware that their *Grand Monarque* is stricken down by disease which seems likely to terminate in death. Deliverance at last, then, is at hand. Deliverance from a moral incubus, as it were, that has long weighed heavily on all classes, and, ever increasing in oppressiveness, is become a burden to them well-nigh intolerable.

During the past year the king's health had been visibly declining. He had undergone also unusual mental anxiety. The expediency of nominating a Council of Regency, and giving his legitimated sons prominent posts in it, had been urged on him with extreme persistency, by Madame de Maintenon and the Duchesse du Maine. They suggested that thus would the recently conferred rights of those princes, who, in the possible failure of the legitimate line, were to be called on to ascend the throne, be more firmly secured to them. At the same time, a needful check would be placed on the ambitious, even criminal, views attributed to the dissolute Duc d'Orleans, in the near pros-

pect of his assuming the regency. The king adopted the course recommended, to free himself, it has been said, from further importunity. But, as if foreseeing how little consideration such an arrangement would receive when the time came for giving effect to it, Saint-Simon asserts that when Louis XIV. had signed this important testament, he exclaimed, "What shall be will be; but at least I shall be at ease, and not obliged to listen to any more talk on the subject."

This was in 1714. He had made these concessions, then, to purchase repose for the brief span of time that remained to him. But he did not yet allow that he felt any symptoms of disease. He said he was perfectly well; he indeed resented the allusions to his impaired state of health conveyed in the recommendations of his physician, at the suggestion of Madame de Maintenon, that his majesty would eat fewer strawberries and green peas. His constitution had been vigorous. Habitually he drank little wine, but he ate voraciously; often in the course of the night. He had always had a very large appetite, which he still retained and continued to indulge, not only with immoderate quantities of strawberries and peas, but with a variety of highly seasoned dishes.\* For another twelve months he bore up bravely enough; neither discontinued nor shortened his accustomed daily walks, notwithstanding uncomfortable sensations in the legs, nor absented himself from the royal hunts, though he returned from them much out of temper, being prostrated by fatigue.

But, on the 13th of August, 1715, still heedless of the warnings he had received to husband his failing

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\* Lettres de Mde. de Maintenon.

strength, he gave audience, standing, to the Persian ambassador and his suite, and conversed with him, through an interpreter, for a considerable time. The next day he was compelled to succumb. His despotic will had subdued and crushed out the spirit of a great nation, but its strength was found weakness in the struggle with failing nature. So the *Grand Monarque* kept his bed that day, hoping to rise on the morrow with strength recruited and well braced up for his customary part in the ceremonial to be observed on the great Fête of St. Louis. After receiving the Eucharist, the solemn farce of touching for the king's evil was then usually performed, the suppliants kneeling in a line on either side of the corridor leading from the chapel to the palace. As the shadow of the superb Louis fell upon these poor creatures, and the act of grace conveyed in the touch of the royal hand of the "Anointed of the Lord and eldest son of the Church" was vouchsafed to them, the Cardinal Grand Almoner, with attendant bishops, followed, in great state, repeating the formula, "The king touches you, may the Lord heal you."

It appears that an unusually large number of suffering children had been brought from various parts of France, for this particular fête, as a favorable occasion for the cure of their ailments by the royal touch. Great, therefore, was the disappointment and despair of the friends of these unfortunates, when it was announced that the ceremony could not take place. The king was very languid and weak that morning, and his physicians declared that an attempt to attend would be fatal to him. To weakness succeeded pain, but it was not until the 25th, though daily growing worse, sight and hearing also failing him, that he would

believe death to be so near at hand. It was then that the Grand Almoner, Cardinal de Rohan, thinking the occasion one likely to be productive of much spiritual consolation to the ailing monarch, and of especial benefit to the halt and the maimed who sought healing from his touch, mentioned to the king that the presbytery was crowded with poor sick folk, come from afar, for his Majesty's Fête. The curé of Versailles had charitably assembled them there, and, as means offered, was despatching them to their homes. But the cardinal interfered and prevented this, and obtained the king's consent to the ceremony of the *attouchement* being performed in his bedchamber, on the morning of the 26th. The fatigue of it was so great that, although his hands were supported by the ecclesiastics at his bedside, it was not fully completed when the king fell heavily back on his cushions, as if dead.

For upwards of five hours he remained in a state of utter unconsciousness. So little was he expected to revive, that Madame de Maintenon was prevailed on to leave for St. Cyr, and as no signs of returning life were perceived after three hours' anxious watching, the courtiers who crowded the *salons* and antechambers of the palace, gradually departed to fill the hitherto deserted apartments of the Duc d'Orleans.

But Louis XIV. still lives, recovers from his lengthened swoon and inquires for Madame de Maintenon, for whom a courier is instantly despatched. The news, the unwelcome news, swiftly reaches the Palais Royal. Immediately the worshippers of the rising sun fly back to pay homage to the setting luminary; whom, in their precipitancy, when but obscured by a passing cloud, they believed already sunk below the

horizon. Versailles again swarms with anxious inquirers, and the Duc d'Orleans is left once more alone. He laughs cynically at the practical lesson he has received of the truth of the maxim of his former preceptor, the Abbé Dubois, who had striven to impress it indelibly on his mind, that "the mainspring of all men's actions is sheer self-interest." It is the basis of the duke's moral creed, that virtue is wholly non-existent, and that the so-called moral qualities, though invested with names, are but the sentimental imaginings of the inexperienced and weak-minded.

An empiric, who had treated with success some complaints of the same sciatic nature as that from which the king was supposed to be suffering, was permitted to prescribe for him a so-called elixir. Its effects were speedy, and apparently beneficial; a satisfaction to the very few who desired the prolongation of a reign already too long by fifteen years, as most persons thought. The revival, however, was but as a transitory gleam from a fading fire; the spark of life was too nearly extinct to be rekindled. Louis himself was quite conscious of it, and expressed a wish that his successor should be brought to him, and his family assemble around him. He remarked on the 29th that he had not heard the *aubade*, or military *reveil*, which it was customary, at dawn of day, to play under his chamber windows; and he gave orders that neither it, nor the usual daily performance in the Salle des Gardes, at his dinner hour, of the sixty musicians of his private band, should be discontinued, until the Grand Almoner announced the administration of the last sacraments.

The regret, the remorse, said to have been evinced by Louis XIV. for many of the acts of his past life; his

injunctions to his youthful heir to avoid treading in the path of vain-glory he had himself pursued, and which had brought so much sorrow and suffering on the nation; his recommendation of the aged Madame de Maintenon to the kindness and generosity of his nephew; and his somewhat specious statement to that nephew respecting the provisions of his testament, need not here be enlarged upon. Nor is it necessary to repeat the speeches attributed to him on his death-bed. Those stagey, oratorical death-beds are the reverse of edifying; and it is probable that the king was as little loquacious as poor human nature at its last gasp usually is. The *Grand Monarque* died on the first of September, and the announcement of his death "was hailed throughout France with an explosion of delight;" for it was regarded as the end of a public calamity, the removal of the yoke of bondage he had bound on the neck of the nation.

Such was the agitated state of public feeling in the first frenzied burst of popular joy, that it was deemed expedient, in order to avoid insult from a turbulent crowd that surrounded Versailles, to convey Madame de Maintenon to St. Cyr, in the private carriage of Maréchal de Villeroi; also to post small parties of guards at short intervals along the road, to protect her from ill-treatment should she be recognized. The relics worn by the king, and which, probably, were her gifts, were handed to her. They became objects of fervent adoration at St. Cyr. A piece of the "wood of the true cross," amongst "the best certified of the relics," she says, she presented to her niece, Madame de Caylus, a lady of very wavering faith and worldly tastes.



Louis XIV. had, doubtless, succeeded in convincing himself, as well as his subjects, that he was the incarnation of glory and grandeur. He was actually the centre of authority, and the possessor of power more irresponsible and absolute than any French monarch before or since has wielded. To stamp out the vigor of the nation, to suppress the slightest manifestation of national sentiment, were the great objects of his reign, from the time of the Fronde. If he had acquired little else, he had thoroughly acquired the art of reigning with despotic and uncontrolled sway. In that sense, and in that alone, Louis XIV. was a great king; though very far indeed from being a great man. He was the light and glory, the sun and centre, of the system of government of which he was the creator. It was his sublime good pleasure, as ruler of France, to be all things to all men; to allow them no will of their own, but to make his the pivot on which opinion and feeling throughout the nation should turn. And he succeeded; so readily do the French yield to a high-handed despot. Men fell into the habit of saying, "May his majesty guard me against it," instead of, "God forbid," and generally of speaking of their *Grand Monarque* with far more humility and reverence than of the Ruler of the universe. "*L'état, c'était lui—La France, c'était lui*"—*La patrie* had become an obsolete term, merged in that of "Le Roi."

The dissolute pleasures of his younger days, when vice was so exquisitely varnished that it was said to have put on the dignified aspect of virtue, naturally, with advancing years, grew less attractive to him. He turned then to devotion. His court followed suit. Piety was the fashion; even the *bourgeoisie* became

more devout, and all who aspired to win favor wore a sanctimonious air.

“ Lorsque le grand Louis brûla d'un tendre amour,  
Paris devint Cythère, et tout suivit la cour;  
Quand il se fit dévôt, ardent à la prière,  
Tout zélé citadin marmota son bréviaire.”

*Épît. du Gd. Frederic.\**

Primness was good taste with the beauties of the day, who, however, contrived to invest it with a certain air of mockery that was very coquettish, and very effective under a “sad-colored” coiffe. Court balls were not wholly given up; they were only less frequent, and the hours devoted to them fewer; perhaps because they were somewhat formal and dull, notwithstanding the romping and boisterous gayety of the young Duchess of Burgundy. State concerts also sometimes took place. Madame de Maintenon would have had them solely devoted to the singing of the canticles of the Church. But Louis was, in this respect, less rigid than she. He still loved to hear his own praises, and to sing them himself, in the fulsome verses of Quinault, set to music by Lulli. Lulli's music was then thought rather out of date, but the king, who piqued himself on his musical taste, would listen to the works of no other composer, ignoring altogether the rising reputation of Compra and Rameau.

In the absence of other excitement, play was pursued with increased avidity. The stakes were higher, the losses more ruinous. It should be remembered that it was when piety was most in favor with Louis XIV., the greatest *roué* of the eighteenth century made his

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\* “ When Louis the great was in love, Paris became Cythera;  
When he became devout, every citizen murmured a prayer.”

*début* at Marly, and was petted and caressed by the whole court, including both Madame de Maintenon and the king. "He is a prodigy," writes the former; "he is the dearest doll in the world." This prodigy was the young Duc de Fronsac, afterwards de Richelieu—a libertine from his youth. He danced, we are told, with wonderful grace; fenced with inimitable skill; rode with the ease and dashing bearing of an accomplished cavalier; and sought the good graces of the ladies with extraordinary success. The pious court of Marly was the real scene of "Les premiers amours de Richelieu." He was then in his fifteenth year.

From twenty to thirty thousand francs were lost by this brilliant youth in the course of an evening at a *tête-à-tête* game of cards. He made love with exceeding persistency to the Duchess of Burgundy, who at least appears to have been amused by it, and to have smiled so graciously upon him that it gave rise to many jests, which reached the king's ears and displeased him extremely. Idle tongues were immediately silenced; and this dangerous young gentleman—already married to Mdlle. de Noailles—was dismissed the court. A *lettre-de-cachet*, enclosed in a letter of strong complaint, was despatched to his father, who himself took charge of his hopeful son, and conveyed him to the Bastille. To amuse him, for inability to ramble about Paris was his only punishment, a clever, pleasant-tempered Abbé was sent to him, as companion and tutor. During his confinement he acquired some notions of reading and writing, and, assisted by the Abbé, was supposed to have translated Virgil. De Fronsac was not a solitary instance of vicious propensities in the rising generation of courtiers at that

period of hypocritical devotion. Many of the young nobility resembled him, and were looking forward no less anxiously than the *bourgeoisie* for the ardently desired liberty then anticipated from a change of rulers.

Famine and pestilence, meanwhile, were frequent in the provinces, and their victims were numerous. Distress was general, and so extremely severe during the terrible winter of 1709-10, that of the mass of the French people a large proportion could scarcely obtain bread to appease hunger. Yet letters and memoirs attest that the king was as selfishly extravagant and reckless in expenditure as ever. New taxes were imposed on the suffering people, for the State's coffers were empty. The needs of the king and his armies were pressing, and money must be wrung from some quarter. Were not the possessions of his subjects his to their last *écu*?—the control of their purses, no less than the control of their consciences, the indisputable prerogative of his kingly power? Louis XIV. was convinced that it was so. Yet he conscientiously sought for his conviction the sanction of high ecclesiastical authority.

"Mankind," says Dr. Moore, "are governed by force and opinion. They were the agents made use of by Louis XIV. in a supreme degree. Aided by them he had brought his subjects to submit with alacrity to heavier exactions than were ever wrung by tyranny from man." But although national pride, love of independence, and every noble and elevating sentiment seemed to be extinguished in France, yet, as the reign of Louis XIV. drew towards its close, the misery and ruin he had wrought in the land kindled in men's hearts the fire of an intense hate, a feverish impatience of the existing order of things, and an ardent longing

for the end of it. No wonder, then, that when the end came it was hailed throughout the land with delirious joy, and that the people, as with one voice, shouted thanksgiving to God for the deliverance vouchsafed to them.

To the infant prince who succeeded him, Louis XIV. left a kingdom drained to the utmost of its resources; an empty treasury, and a debt of near two hundred millions sterling; lands ravaged by foreign foes; commerce destroyed, and once flourishing manufactures extinct. In the ruined provinces, a despairing, depressed population; and amongst the enervated and corrupt aristocracy, reared amidst the idle pleasures of a vicious, hypocritical court, not one able statesman to take the helm of a government, long isolated in the person of an absolute ruler whose place was now filled by so feeble an image of royalty.

Louis XIV. left his heart to the Jesuits. His body, on the 9th of September, was borne with little ceremony to the Abbey of St. Denis. As at the funeral of his father, near seventy-three years before, "the people"—to use the words of Tallemant des Reaux on that occasion—"followed as joyously as though going to a wedding." But even greater indecorum was anticipated. In consequence, the funeral procession, forsaking the high-road, reached St. Denis by the way of the fields and by-paths. A frantic multitude had assembled in the faubourg, and received "with gibes and curses the coffin of the conqueror, whom they accused of being the cause of their troubles, and of wars which sprang only from his arrogance, ambition, and injustice."\* Throughout the day a sort of fair was held

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\* Soulavie.

on the square near the abbaye, and dancing and singing, drinking and jesting, were kept up with vociferous glee until nightfall. "One would have thought," says De Tocqueville, "that the license of the *petits soupers* of the regency was already descending on the public square."

Thus, precluding, as it were, to that ferociously insane joy with which, eighty years later on, his tomb was violated and his ashes scattered to the wind, was celebrated the passing away of the *Grand Monarque*, and, with it, as it is customary to say, the grandeur and glory of the old French Monarchy. The revolution to be accomplished towards the end of the century may be said to have begun at this time. The intervening period, though too generally characterized by frivolity and freedom—even license—in the manners of the day, was, nevertheless, in its social aspects often animated and dramatic. Distinct, be it observed, from those political events and changes of government which led to anarchy, strife, and bloodshed, and eventually to the overthrow of the monarchy. These are matters to be left to the grave historian to descant upon. Here they need be but very cursorily glanced at; it being attempted only in the following pages to present a brief sketch of the society of the eighteenth century, in its various phases, from the death of Louis XIV. to the fall of absolutism and the old French Régime, in the person of Louis XVI. and of Marie Antoinette.

## CHAPTER II.

The Council of Regency.—Le Duc d'Orleans declared Regent.—  
Courting Popularity.—First Acts of the Regent.—Golden  
Opinions.—The Young King.—His First Lit-de-Justice.—  
The King and his Governor.—The King's First Public  
Speech.—Popularity of the Regent.

LOUIS XIV. died in the evening; and as in the two preceding reigns, beginning also with a regency, no time was lost in summoning the Parliament. That judicial body assembled before ten the next morning, when the princes of the blood, the peers of the realm, and a brilliant military *cortège*, accompanied the Duc d'Orleans to a *séance* of the house of peers. Many were the protestations, on the part of the duke, of his excellent intentions towards the country; of his anxiety for the preservation of the life, and zeal for the welfare, of the young king. He also expressed a desire to be guided in the fulfilment of his arduous duties by the enlightened counsels and, if needed, sage remonstrances of the august Parliament there assembled. The testament of Louis XIV. was then opened.

Great surprise was evinced, and perhaps felt, by some few who had listened to the duke's profuse promises of using the great power confided to him wisely, when it was found that by the late king's will he was appointed president only of a Council of Regency. The Parliament, therefore—whose most influential members had been gained over by the duke's partisans—being invested, as before, with supreme

authority for the occasion, at once proceeded to discuss the expediency of setting aside the testament of their *Grand Monarque*. Its most important provisions were pronounced illegal; no less contrary to all precedent than to the statutes of the realm. The charge of the person of the young king, the control of his education, and the command of the household troops, were assigned by it to the Duc du Maine. But this arrangement was unhesitatingly superseded, and without a single dissentient voice, both the title and the uncontrolled powers of regent were conferred on the Duc d'Orleans. The young Duc de Bourbon—Condé—hideous in person, ignorant and depraved, and possessing his full share of the violence of temper and brutality of disposition inherent in his race—put in a claim to the control of the king's education. Not being of the required age, twenty-four, his claim was disallowed, and, for the time being, the Duc du Maine was permitted to hold the sinecure post of superintendent of the child-king's studies.

The authority exercised by the parliamentary body had gradually been cut down to zero, during the last forty years, by Louis XIV. Nominally to confirm his edicts, seemed to be the chief object of the existence of a Parliament. Decrees emanating from it he annulled without scruple, when not fully coinciding with his own private views. The privilege of remonstrating had long been withheld from it. However oppressive the taxes, or arbitrary and impolitic the measures approved by the king, and imposed on the people, submission was the rule, and the Parliament, to preserve its own existence, consented to be dumb. Doubtless, then, some degree of secret satisfaction was felt in annulling the testament of so imperious and



absolute a ruler. Some secret hope, too, probably, that power and prestige might be regained by the readiness and unanimity with which the aims of the Duc d'Orleans had been met and accomplished.

Nor was this wholly a vain hope. For the regent, courting popularity, and elated by easy victory—the Duc du Maine, whether from timidity or indifference, having opposed no obstacle to it—at once restored to the Parliament its long-withdrawn privilege of remonstrating against unsatisfactory edicts. It did not necessarily follow that the remonstrances would be heeded. The duke, indeed, declared, amidst general applause, that he would not consent to have his hands tied when it was a question of doing good, but would willingly be fettered should he seem inclined to do evil. He, however, proceeded with undue eagerness to overthrow the *Système Louis XIV.*, and to make many ill-considered changes in the administration of government. Even zealous supporters of his claims, appointed to new posts he had created, the *Maréchal de Villars*, for instance, urged on him the advisability of carrying out his projected reforms with less haste and more judgment.

He had promised—it was, however, notorious that he never kept his promises—that taxation should be diminished, and economy be the order of the day in the expenditure of the court. To practise or enforce economy was not in his nature or consistent with his habits. Yet the regent, notwithstanding his vicious course of life, had in his character the elements of several good qualities—qualities that might have developed into virtues had not the infamous hands in which it was his misfortune to be placed in his youth, done their utmost to eradicate all that gave promise

of good in him. There was frankness and *bonhomie* in his manner, and leniency in his disposition. It was readily believed, too, that a sense of justice, no less than feelings of humanity, prompted his first act of authority—an order to throw open the doors of the Bastille and set the oppressed free.

This was a step that secured for the regent immense popularity. It was a real blessing, too, to many sorrowing families, and to many guiltless victims of despotic caprice, who were languishing away life, sick at heart, and longing for deliverance that came not. To one of these unfortunates, the unexpected message "you are free" proved a message of death. Hope in that drooping heart had given place to despair, and, under the powerful reaction of the startling announcement, the thread of life suddenly snapped. Another, who had spent thirty-five years in the Bastille, heard of freedom with fear and trembling. The outside world had lost its interest for him. Friends, relatives, home—all were no more. He therefore humbly prayed to be allowed, as a favor, to spend his remaining days within the walls of that prison in which he had been condemned to waste away the vigorous years of manhood, but which now, in friendless old age, he clung to as a refuge.

Golden opinions rewarded the regent. The people looked hopefully forward to the speedy sweeping away of the many abuses that had sprung up during the long despotism of Louis XIV. They imagined that past excesses, the scandal of his former life, and the parade he had hitherto made of vice, were to be redeemed by the future employment for the good of the nation and the welfare of the king, of the excellent abilities the Duc d'Orleans really possessed.

On the 12th of September the youthful Louis XV. was brought from Vincennes to Paris, for the formality of giving his *viva voce* assent, before the assembled house of peers, to the acts done in his name by the regent. Vast was the throng that greeted the first public appearance of this one remaining blossom of royalty. He was attended by those serious and elderly grandees of the *vieille cour*, appointed to their several posts by the late king, and who could not be superseded by the regent without giving color to suspicions, still current in some quarters, of his designs on the young king's life. On the arrival of Louis XV. and his suite, the Duc de Fresme, Grand Chamberlain, took the child in his arms, carried him to the throne, and placed him there on a cushion. At the foot of the throne sat the Duchesse de Ventadour, *la grande gouvernante*, stiff and formal, and arrayed in heavy mourning robes of black and violet velvet, and a long veil of black crape. The duchess represented on this occasion a queen-mother. Before taking her seat, she announced to the assembled Parliament that the chancellor would inform them of the will and intention of his majesty. His little majesty's mourning garb was of violet cloth; a full plaited tunic, and jacket with hanging sleeves, lined with black satin and edged with gold fringe. His auburn hair floated over his shoulders in natural curls. A little violet crape cap, with a lining of gold tissue, covered his head, and on his neck, suspended by a blue riband, were the crosses of the Orders of St. Louis and of the St. Esprit—decorations he seemed greatly to admire, and to be very proud of. His leading-strings were crossed back over his chest and shoulders. They were of gold cloth, with small pearls worked in, and were worn to indicate the childhood of the Ruler of France,

rather than for use. For he was five years of age, and although very delicate, and reared hitherto only by extraordinary care and attention, he was a swift runner. He was perfectly well formed, too, though, as a print of the time shows, he had been bandaged and strapped up, as poor infants in those days were wont to be; to which custom the prevalence of deformity and stunted growth were in a great degree due. Louis XV. was a beautiful child. His deep blue eyes had a rather melancholy, appealing expression, and an earnestness in their gaze, which inspired an interest in him.

On the occasion of this first *lit-de-justice* held in his name, the child-king, reclining on his cushion, observed with amazement all that took place. With a profoundly attentive, but somewhat puzzled, air, he listened to the speeches and harangues that were addressed to him, and the oaths of fidelity that followed. He was beginning to show signs of weariness and impatience, when the dignitaries of the Church then present greatly attracted his notice: perhaps because of their magnificent vestments, point-lace, gold crosses, and robes of scarlet and violet; but the especial fascination was the red hat of the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal de Noailles.

The Maréchal Duc de Villeroi—he who so signally failed when commanding the armies of France to evince any of the qualities of a great general—was one of the most finished and stately of the circle of courtiers who had surrounded Louis XIV. He now held the office of governor to the young king, and in that capacity stood by his side near the throne. Shocked at the persistency with which his royal charge continued, with a long, fixed stare, to regard the

cardinal archbishop, he endeavored to divert his attention from him. But all in vain. He heeded not his governor's whispered reproofs, his admonitory shakings of the head, the great eyes he made, and other deprecatory signs of amazement. Meeting at last the maréchal's angry glances, the child replied to them by bursting into tears, stretching out his arms to his *gouvernante*, and calling out lustily to the maréchal, "*Laissez moi faire; laissez moi, donc!*"—"leave me alone; I will do as I like." So that the first public utterance of this baby-king embodied, as was then remarked, the fundamental law and the principal maxim of absolute hereditary monarchy.

This little outburst of temper and feeling brought the business of the *lit-de-justice* speedily to a close. The royal assent was *supposed* to be given to the proceedings of the *séance*; for no coaxings could prevail on his majesty to utter, as entreated, the simple word "*Oui.*" He had expended his energy in asserting his right to stare at his archbishop as earnestly and as long as he pleased. It was now his good pleasure to show his firmness by silence. So the Assembly submitted to accept silence for assent, and at once broke up.

The health of the hope of the nation must not be risked by needlessly fretting him. It was, indeed, almost too jealously watched over, and the child shielded with unslumbering care from the possible approach of harm, by the Maréchal de Villeroy.

Between him and the regent the strongest antipathy existed; and the latter was glad to seize the opportunity of commenting very openly on the duke's injudicious severity, as he termed it, in publicly reprimanding his youthful charge for a childlike and inoffensive

act. Three years had scarcely elapsed since the regent had been hooted through the streets, mud and stones thrown into his carriage, and an attempt made to force an entrance into the Palais Royal. The nation at large execrated him as the suspected poisoner of the young Duke and Duchess of Burgundy and their son. Now, he was overwhelmed with the applause of the house of peers, and returned to the Palais Royal amidst the acclamations of an enthusiastic people, who hailed him as their liberator, and the expected restorer of peace and prosperity to France.

### CHAPTER III.

The Regency.—Its Libertinage.—The Regent's Roués.—Seeking Interviews with Satan.—Madame Lucifer.—Madame, the Regent's Mother.—Audacity of Voltaire.—Character of the Regent.—A Boaster of Vices.—Yet Generally Popular.—The Regent's Gallantry.

THE Regency has been called "*La Fronde des mœurs légères.*" The epithet is euphonious. It, however, but inadequately describes that state of moral corruption which, from its centre—the depraved court of the regent—spread to the social circles of the higher nobles, infected the society of the upper *bourgeoisie*, and exercised a baneful influence on the French people generally. Scarcely was France freed from the severe restraint which the despotic will of a single man had so long imposed on her, than the reaction began. The regent, roused to unusual activity by the unjust partiality displayed in the late king's will, momentarily renounced his dissolute pleasures. But no sooner were the reins of government securely in his hands, than he gave the signal, as he had before set the example, and, nothing loth, it would seem, both *grands seigneurs* and *grandes dames*—more eager for license than the nation for liberty—plunged with him into every excess. Hypocrisy threw off its mask, and libertinism exhibited itself with open effrontery.

The ladies of the court, the elderly no less than the young, were weary of the domination of Madame de Maintenon, and had looked to be relieved from it with

her retreat to St. Cyr. The continuance of her mystic influence, and of the "Système Antiquaille" of Louis XIV.—as the new generation termed it—under the Duc du Maine, had, therefore, been regarded as an intolerable infliction; even by those courtiers who were not of the partisans of the Duc d'Orleans. Many thus became supporters of his claims who socially were alienated from him; owing to that singular perversion both of mind and judgment which led him to glory in the reputation he had acquired for frightful depravity and crime. He encouraged, and even set afloat, the most exaggerated reports of his deplorable excesses, and of the unblushing vice that prevailed at his private reunions at the Palais Royal. Thus, as Fénelon remarked, when suspicion fixed on the duke as the poisoner of the Dauphin, "making credible that which, from its vileness, it was most difficult to give credit to."

Something of that spirit which animated the youthful *frondeurs* when in the moats of old Paris they attacked their less reckless companions, probably influenced the Duc d'Orleans so openly to resort to vicious courses. By his avowed *libertinage* (meaning then, disregard of religious observances) and want of respect for propriety of conduct, he evinced his contempt for the hypocritical austerity and sham devotion which veiled the backslidings of the pious court of Marly and Versailles. A servile throng of courtiers attended Louis XIV., adapting their manners to his changing moods. Their faces were often lugubrious, and their usual dresses "sad-colored;" for, as the fit of penitence was often very strong, it became necessary to modify the brilliancy of their garments, to substitute rich embroidery for gold and silver, but never



to appear in black. The Duc d'Orleans had also his courtiers; the sharers of his pleasures—his dissipated band of "*roués*." More than one explanation has been given of this flattering *sobriquet*. Generally, he is said to have so named them from their having, one and all, earned the unenviable distinction of meriting the rack or wheel—a punishment to which offenders of a lower social rank would have been condemned—for the many infamous acts of their dissolute career. On the other hand, it has been asserted, on behalf of this noble fraternity, that the appellation signified rather a band of congenial spirits, who would not shrink from the torture of the rack, should such a test of their devotion to their chief ever be required of them. It is, however, unlikely that the duke credited the companions he had christened his "*roués*" with any such feeling, as he professed to doubt—or, rather, he denied—the existence of disinterestedness, even in the most honorable of men.

In his youth he possessed courage and activity, and was believed to have exhibited other soldier-like qualities; but the selfishness and jealousy of Louis XIV. denied him, as in other instances in his family, the opportunity of distinguishing himself. He took to the study of chemistry, and obtained by it the reputation of a poisoner, and a seeker after the philosopher's stone. He possessed some skill in painting and music, and in the mechanical arts. "More than a superficial knowledge," says Duclos. He had also turned his attention to astronomy, with which, as at that period was not uncommon, astrology was combined. This, it was believed, was to hold communion with the powers of darkness; to seek interviews with Satan, as some of the wild young rakes of that day actually did

—de Richelieu being one of them. But their request to his Satanic majesty to appear was unheeded, and some unexpected noises occurring near the spot where their incantations were performed, these bold spirits tottered away in a dreadful fright, one or two swooning with terror.

To return to the young Duc d'Orleans—then de Chartres—his latest tutor was the Abbé Dubois, a dissolute priest, but a man of some ability, who, while tutoring him in vice, gained considerable influence over him. Louis XIV. did not disdain to employ the abbé to overcome his pupil's repugnance to the marriage he had arranged for him with Mdlle. de Blois, one of his illegitimate daughters. This marriage was looked upon with extreme disfavor also by Madame, the Princess Charlotte de Bavière, mother of the duke. Like the princes of the House of Condé, when from time to time one of the many spurious offshoots of royalty was thrust upon them by the king, she regarded the union as a *mésalliance* and a dishonor. It, however, took place. The bride considered that she had conferred a great honor on the Orleans family by condescending to marry the Duc de Chartres. She was so haughty that he was accustomed to call her Madame Lucifer. At times he compared her to Minerva, who, while acknowledging no mother, gloried in being the daughter of Jupiter. Soon after the marriage, Monsieur, the duke's father—in whose steps the son had diligently walked—was carried off by apoplexy, subsequently to an interview with the august Louis, at which some very warm words had passed between the brothers. De Chartres then became Duc d'Orleans. His duchess, who, at first, complained greatly of her husband's dissipation, soon fell into

similar habits. While Madame, who, though a little eccentric, was remarkably shrewd and witty, held aloof from the court, she yet kept a vigilant eye open on all that was passing. In her numerous letters to her German friends and relatives, she narrated all the follies and scandals of the day, and chronicled them for posterity in her *Mémoires*, with the same piquancy and unsparing causticity; few of the celebrities of the period escaping her lash.

Madame, naturally, was much attached to her son, though she was aware of his vices, and greatly lamented them. She accounted for them rather fantastically. At his birth, she said, numberless good genii assembled and endowed him with the germ of every virtue. One of the number, however, who arrived late, being annoyed that nothing was left for her to bestow, maliciously decreed that he should want the power of making use of the gifts which the early arrivals had lavished upon him. "And my son is still under the charm of the malicious fairy," said the princess; "he has within him the germ of all the virtues, but he cannot develop it." Her head was full of fairy tales and old German legends. She was, however, far too clever and keen-sighted to put faith in them, or to be blind to the results of evil example and corrupt training, of which the regent was so striking and lamentable an instance.

Yet it was, in some sort, true that the regent had not the power of making use of the good qualities with which many of his contemporaries believed him endowed. Voltaire speaks of him as "celebrated for courage, wit, and pleasures," as a man born to shine in society even more than to conduct affairs of state; one of the most amiable men that ever existed.

Voltaire, in 1718, had received a striking proof of the regent's amiability, according to the notions of those days of *lettres-de-cachet*. He had just been released from the Bastille, where, for a cutting satire on the regent and his government, falsely attributed to him, he had spent the last twelve months. The error being discovered, Voltaire was liberated. While waiting in the antechamber to be introduced to the regent, who proposed to make him pecuniary compensation for his detention, a violent storm came on: thunder, lightning, a perfect whirlwind. To the dismay of a number of persons, waiting also to see the regent, Voltaire suddenly exclaimed, looking towards the sky, "They must have a regency up there to produce such a bad state of things as this." None dared utter a word, or venture to smile at so astounding a piece of audacity. The speech was immediately made known to the regent. Voltaire, being introduced, "This is M. Voltaire who is now leaving the Bastille?" inquired the Duc. "Oui, Monseigneur," replied the chamberlain, "unless it be your good pleasure that he should return to it." But the regent, repeating Voltaire's words, laughed heartily at them, as at a good joke. Voltaire, we are told, thanked him for the good cheer he had been provided with during his sojourn in the Bastille; adding, however, he trusted his highness would not again trouble himself to provide him with a lodging. Sallies of that kind were regarded with less leniency in the Louis XIV. period.

Duclos mentions the duke's "brilliant valor, and his modesty when referring to his own part in any action." He thinks he would have been a great general had not his advancement been thwarted by the narrow-minded policy of the king; "he was always in

subjection to the court," he says, "and under the tutelage of the army." In Saint-Simon's portrait of the regent (Saint-Simon, often so eloquently vituperative, colors highly at all times, whether it be to praise or to blame, yet he knew the regent intimately), he is represented as gifted in a higher degree than are most men, with personal fascination and intellectual qualities: "Affable, kindly, frank, easy of access; a pleasant voice, the gift of speech of all kinds. Natural eloquence; precision alike in the most abstract sciences, which he made plain, in questions of government, of politics, finance, law, court etiquette, and common usage, and in all kinds of art and mechanism." Notwithstanding these great talents and varied acquirements, he yet describes him as being oppressed by *ennui*; utterly without resource, and finding life barely endurable, except in the midst of those insane pleasures which he actually abhorred, but from long indulgence in could not, or would not, give up. Depravity had become a mania, whose pernicious influence he no longer had the power to shake off. Yet, beneath the dark colors in which the Duc d'Orleans so strangely delighted that his character should appear, even Louis XIV. readily discerned "a boaster of vices he is not guilty of," and his contemporaries generally have endorsed this judgment.

Such was the regent, Philippe Duc d'Orleans, to whom the destinies of France and her child-king were to be confided for the next eight years. During those years, in spite of his depravity, and the ruinous financial schemes he sanctioned, the people became much attached to the man whom they had once followed to his home with hootings and maledictions. "The Parisians," says Anquetil, "adored him. He was so

affable, so courteous, so desirous of obliging." The air of kindness and interest with which he listened to appeals that were made to him was in itself a charm. He had the art of refusing a request without giving pain, for he appeared pained himself at his inability to comply with it. There was something in the earnestness yet gentleness of his looks that was especially flattering. The people assembled in crowds to get but a glimpse of him when he left or returned to his palace, and flocked to the theatres in the hope of seeing him there.

He was no less successful in gaining the good opinion of the foreign ministers. For, while the charm of his manners had its usual prepossessing effect, the justice of his views, his keen political insight, his ready comprehension and clear explanation of the most intricate questions of state, the cautious reserve of his inquiries, and the ease and finesse of his replies, won the general admiration of the diplomatists. The regent, in short, had suddenly achieved popularity. The youth of the nation was with him, and fair dames admired him; for he was courteous and gallant to the young, deferential in his attentions to the elderly—even the youthful monarch (a melancholy child, and *ennuyé* from his infancy) brightened into smiles and became animated when the regent visited him.

If the Duc d'Orleans could but have sustained this character, it would have been well both for himself and for France. But strength of mind and force of will being wanting, he too often fell back to his accustomed vicious courses, and the qualities that might have made him the regenerator of France served but to give attraction to his evil example, and to facilitate the moral perversion of all who came within its influence.

## CHAPTER IV.

Un Salon très Respectable.—The Hôtel Lambert.—La Marquise de Lambert.—The Palais Mazarin.—Weekly Literary Dinners.—French Cooks of the Eighteenth Century.—The Wealthy Financiers.—A Party of Old Friends.—La Motte-Houdart.—Homer and Madame Dacier. The Salon Lambert.—The Bureau d'Esprit.—The Goddess of Sceaux.—The Marquis de St. Aulaire.—The Duc du Maine.—A Desperate Little Woman.—Portrait of the Duchess.—Genealogical Researches.—Drowsy Reading.

THE traditions of the once famous *salon* of the Marquise de Rambouillet had well-nigh died out towards the close of the seventeenth century. Gradually, as the literary and social celebrities of that period disappeared from the stage of life, the *salons* which claimed to represent those traditions became extinct, and no new ones were opened to replace them. Those reunions of the noble, the witty, and the learned had never been looked on with favor by the king, even in his youth. But when wintry old age crept upon him, with its usual selfish distaste for other enjoyments than its own, he regarded with a sterner and still more jealous eye whatever appeared to be a counter-attraction to the formal etiquette and gloomy piety of his court. He would have had the French people grow old and devout with him; forgetting that while individuals are passing away, a nation is renewing its youth, and inventing new pleasures for itself.

There, however, still existed in Paris a *salon* of the old type; yet somewhat modified—having yielded, as

time went on, to the influence of changing surroundings. It was the *salon* of Madame de Lambert, a great lady of the old court, refined in sentiment, polished in manners. It was distinguished as "*un salon très respectable.*" In other words, it was not of the new school of light ways, inaugurated with the regency, which showed little respect for the *convenances* hitherto observed in polite society. Madame de Lambert was the authoress of several works. They were written chiefly for the instruction of her son and daughter, but were held in general esteem in their day. She had a considerable acquaintance with Latin and Greek, yet was quite free from pedantry and all affectation of learning.

So long back as 1666, Thérèse de Marguenat de Courcelles had married, at the age of nineteen, the wealthy Henri de Lambert, Marquis de Saint-Brés. The Hôtel Lambert, in the Ile St. Louis, then became her residence: that splendid hôtel, renowned for its elaborately sculptured decorations, its finely carved chimney-pieces, painted panels, ceilings, and staircases. They were the work of such artists as Le Sueur, Le Brun, Van Ostal, Romanilla, Du Bassan, and other painters and sculptors of eminence. The beautiful saloon known as the "Salon des Muses," and the smaller one the "Cabinet d'Amours," were profusely adorned with works of art and exquisite paintings.\* In the costliness of its furniture, it vied with the famous Hôtel Lesdiguières; but in itself, as an artistic masterpiece, far surpassed it.

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\* Subsequently these were placed in the Musée du Louvre. The Hôtel Lambert was pillaged in the revolutionary times; but later on was restored with great taste and a considerable outlay by Prince Adam Czartoriski.



In this princely abode, the most distinguished of the *beau monde*, the most celebrated literary men, the poets, and men of science, both native and foreign, were constantly entertained until the death of the Marquis de Lambert, in 1686—that year so eventful for France; the turning-point in the fortunes of the great Louis. It was the year of the “*Dragonnades*;” the beginning of the reign of Madame de Maintenon.

After a short interval of retirement the marquise reopened her *salons*, and continued to hold her receptions in the same splendid hôtel until 1710. She had made her *début* in society too late in the century to have known the celebrated Madame de Rambouillet. But she was familiar with the far-famed *salon bleu*—having visited the fair Julie d’Angennes, when, as Duchesse de Montausier, she occasionally received her circle of friends in the *salon* that had been the scene of her own youthful triumphs, and her mother’s social celebrity. Mdlle. de Scudéry and Madame de Sévigné had been Madame de Lambert’s intimate friends. She had known also Corneille, Racine, and Molière, and had seen Madame Champmeslé and the famous Michel Baron represent the principal characters in their dramas. She had heard Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and Fléchier denounce the vices of the age, and the Italian manners; and speak with a warning voice even to the *Grand Monarque* himself. In those forty-four years, so full of incident, absolutism had passed from the height of power to the first stage of its decadence.

Owing to family arrangements, the marquise, in 1710, left the Ile St. Louis, and took on a lease, for the term of her life, part of the Hôtel Nevers—that portion of the vast edifice, the Palais Mazarin, now “Bibliothèque Nationale,” which the Marquis de Man-

cini had inherited from the cardinal. It had been built and furnished, as everybody knows, with an utter disregard to cost; for the coffers of the State furnished the funds, under the name of "private expenses." Though still superb, sixty years' use had dimmed much of the original splendor of the gold brocades, embroidered satin hangings, etc., as well as of the decoration of the apartments. But the cardinal's successors had not found it convenient to renew either one or the other. Madame de Lambert foresaw, apparently, that her lease of life had yet more than twenty-one years to run. For she thought it worth while to spend several thousand pounds on the work of renovation, and to build, from the Rue Colbert, a separate entrance to her own part of the palace.

In the other part lived the Duc de Nevers, grand-nephew of the cardinal. He, wavering between the old and new schools, also held frequent receptions, or, to be quite correct, *réunions*, that being the term specially applied to the social gatherings of the lordly sex, while a *salon* denoted an assembly of the *beau monde*, both gentlemen and ladies, and that a lady presided.

The extensive alterations and embellishments—the latter including some graceful panel paintings by Watteau, whose talent was then becoming known—being completed, and the marquise installed in her new hôtel, she issued invitations to a select number of men of letters to dine with her every Thursday. And a splendid dinner she gave them. For her *maître d'hôtel* and *chef-de-cuisine* were of the *élite* of their profession. This weekly literary dinner was then an innovation; but it became a generally adopted custom, dating from about the time of the death of Louis XIV.

Heavy dinners, such as that great monarch's astounding appetite enabled him to consume in the middle of the day, went out of fashion; for with ordinary mortals, but to look on those innumerable, piled-up and steaming-hot dishes sufficed to take appetite away. The dinner hour became somewhat later, and the quantity and solidity of the food less regarded than perfection of cookery. In the regent's gay circle, however, *petits-soupers* were far more in favor than grand dinners.

It may be mentioned, by the way, that the distinguished professors of the gastronomic art, from the regency to within a few years of the revolution, were remarkable for their fertility of imagination, in the invention of new and delicate dishes. Great skill was displayed in combining the ingredients to ensure pleasure to the palate; also, in giving to their savory creations artistic forms agreeable to the cultured eye. Their supremacy in this respect is attested by several of the gastronomic feats of that period, which have remained unapproached, and confessedly are still unapproachable, even by the celebrated artistes of our own day. The post of *chef-de-cuisine* was regarded probably at the period in question as one of greater distinction (be it said without offence) than at the present time. For it was rare indeed that the culinary staff was headed by a *chef* (even of small pretensions, if any such there were), except in the royal households and the *hôtels* of the great nobles; where the professors of gastronomy were necessarily of the *ordon bleu* order.

A very broad line had hitherto separated the different classes of the community. Until the facile manners of the regent emboldened audacious spirits (such

as Voltaire,\* for instance) to set at naught the boundaries that hemmed in the wealthy and talented who were not of the court, even the financiers (men such as Samuel Bernard), the wealthiest, and in some sense, therefore, the most influential class in the State, had scarcely given an instance of the presumption of setting up a *chef*. "They enjoyed their wealth at that time by stealth," as somebody has said. Banquets that outrivalled those of princes were modestly entrusted to the skill of women cooks. Among these, however, were a few well-trained adepts perfectly qualified to compete for the palm of excellence with the most skilful of the culinary brotherhood.

But to return to the Palais Cardinal. To the good cheer provided for the guests of Madame de Lambert were added "the feast of reason and the flow of soul" provided for the hostess by the guests themselves. It was by no means a youthful party. There were the Marquis de Saint-Aulaire, then seventy-five, but destined to complete his century (according to some accounts, he was one hundred and two when he died); Fontenelle, who attained to the same patriarchal age. Madame de Lambert, herself, was then seventy; and the celebrated Madame Dacier and her husband, with the Academician, Louis de Sacy—constant guests at

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\* In the early days of his rising reputation, Voltaire, who had been invited to dine with the Prince de Condé, exclaimed, in reply to the remark of a guest respecting the mixed sort of company he had met at the table of a nobleman on the previous day, "We are, all here, either princes or poets!"—in other words, all of equal rank. It was audacious. But the remark that drew it forth may have been levelled at the young *bourgeois* poet, who, conscious of the royalty of his genius, probably appeared a little too much at his ease to please his illustrious host.

her table—were verging also on their threescore and ten. It was, in fact, a weekly meeting of a circle of old friends, who, in a green old age, still kept alive the cherished memories of the brilliant society of their youth.

It was at one of these dinners that the reconciliation took place between Madame Dacier and the poet-critic, La Motte-Houdart. The estrangement was of old date, and the incident that gave rise to it is probably well known. Unacquainted with Greek, La Motte had ventured to put the "Iliad" into verse from a French prose translation; and, further, in the famous dispute on the respective merits of the ancient and modern authors had declared in favor of the latter. Worse still, his disparaging remarks and notes on Homer had roused the ire of the usually gentle Madame Dacier, who venerated Homer almost as a god. The presumption of La Motte amazed her, and she characterized his criticisms as the result of "ignorance and vanity, and a want of common-sense." This condemnation from so high an authority La Motte bore with more meekness than he probably would have done had it come from one of his own sex. To soothe the outraged feelings of the learned lady, he even addressed to her a complimentary ode on her own great attainments in classic lore. But her indignation was not so easily appeased; and the breach between them was rather widened than otherwise.

Madame de Lambert was a great admirer of the character and talents of Madame Dacier, whom she regarded as an honor to her sex—"uniting," as she said, "vast erudition and the highest domestic virtues with liveliness and wit that gave a charm to the social circle." She was no less just to the merits of La Motte,

and anxiously sought an occasion to reunite the friends whose mutual coldness when they met cast a chill on the gayety of the rest of the party. M. de Valincourt, also an Academician and *habitué* of her hôtel, chanced, however, one day at dinner to make some very happy quotation from Madame Dacier's version of the "Iliad." La Motte was present. Being seated near Madame de Lambert, he requested permission to propose to her guests to drink to the memory of the great Greek poet, and to the health of his accomplished and learned translator. His proposal, of course, met with general approval. The gentlemen rose, and in foaming bumpers of the famous *vin d'Ai* pledged Homer and Madame Dacier with great enthusiasm. *La femme savante* was subdued. And when Madame de Lambert, taking La Motte by the hand, led him to her friend that he might make full confession of his errors as regarded his remarks on the "Iliad" of Homer, she graciously consented to pardon him. It is not, however, recorded that Madame Dacier either apologized for the offensive epithets she had applied to the critic, or that she withdrew them. Yet the reconciliation was probably sincere.

Madame Dacier died about three years later—1720. La Motte wrote her elegy, in terms expressive of high admiration for the character and remarkable talents of that celebrated woman.

Besides these weekly dinners, the marquise, every Tuesday, received in the evening a general circle, as she uninterruptedly had done for so many years past. Her *salon* was one of the very few—probably the only one—where no gambling was allowed. But conversation was to be had, "from grave to gay"—lively, but rarely severe. No set theme. No dreary discussion,

as in the old Rambouillet days, on the retention or abolition of this or that word, and precise determination of its meaning for the benefit of future generations. The forty arm-chairs had now the monopoly of those subjects which once interested so greatly the pretty women of the *salon bleu*. The sentimental love topics of the *précieuse* school had also had their day. But, unfortunately, the courtesy of listening to what others had to say was going out of fashion. The charming talent for conversation, when the piquant remark of one speaker inspired the witty rejoinder or sparkling *bon mot* of another, and on which a preceding generation had so greatly piqued itself, necessarily was ebbing away too. Everybody wished to be heard, but nobody cared to listen. It was then, in fact, that French women began to evince symptoms of a passion or mania for declaiming rather than conversing. But in the *salon Lambert*, manners still received their tone from the hostess; while enough of general politeness yet remained to prevent a whole assembly from talking at once, or one of the number from out-talking all the rest. It was a mania that gradually developed itself through the succeeding years of the eighteenth century, until it culminated at the Revolution, and in the person of Madame de Staël and her political harangues.

A modern writer has said that the pomposity and pretensions of the *salon Lambert* gave rise to the epithet "*bureau d'esprit*" ("office of wit"). But this is an error. The first *salon* so designated was that of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, the niece of Cardinal de Richelieu. She attempted to establish a *salon* at the Petit Luxembourg in rivalry of that of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. But although the great cardinal very rarely

was present, the guests felt that his spirit hovered closely around them in the person of his spies. Formality and restraint were the result. Social enjoyment was banished. The cardinal's troop of dramatists and needy literary hangers-on, of course, sedulously frequented the *salon* of the duchess, and wrote fulsome verses in honor of their patron. The "*bureau d'esprit*," however, soon closed its doors, and the epithet employed to distinguish its dull reunions from the lively assemblages of the *salon bleu* was revived in the term "*les galeries d'esprit*" ("arcades of wit"), for the pretentious *salon* of the Duchesse du Maine at Sceaux.

At this time (first years of the regency), the duchess was more particularly devoted to political affairs than to literature; but when she received at her little court of Sceaux, brilliancy in her guests was indispensable. They must be professed wits, and prove themselves worthy of their reputation by ingenious and versified compliments which, as *soi-disant* adorers, they were expected, from time to time, to address to the "goddess of Sceaux." And sufficiently wearisome some of the most distinguished among them found this tax on wit. The difference between the two *salons* is apparent in the lines of one of the worshippers, the Marquis de Saint-Aulaire:

" Je suis las de l'esprit, il me met en courroux,  
Il me renverse la cervelle ;  
Lambert, je vais chercher un asile chez vous,  
Entre La Motte et Fontenelle."\*

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\* "I am weary of wit, my brain has grown weak,  
I fain would escape from its spell;  
Lambert, with you an asylum I seek,  
Between La Motte and Fontenelle."



This "divinity," as Saint-Aulaire elsewhere poetically speaks of the Duchesse du Maine, was well spiced with *diablerie*. She was, indeed, a wonderful little woman. That pugnacity of spirit and impatience of control which distinguished the Great Condé, whose granddaughter she was, had descended to her. Condé, in his boyhood, would smash the windows and destroy everything that lay within his reach, if rain or other caprices of weather occurred to upset any plans of recreation he had formed. Happily these propensities found vent in the destruction of the enemies of France, and the impetuosity of his character made him a hero, and the commander of armies, while yet a mere youth.

The valor of the duchess was less signally rewarded. She commanded her husband, and to her iron rule the sluggishness of his nature induced ready obedience. But when it became a question of rousing him to that display of energy which, it was believed, would secure the influential position assigned to him by the late king's will, the goadings of the duchess were powerless. The translation of the "Anti-Lucretius," by which the duke vainly hoped to obtain the first vacant chair in the Academy, and the completion of his collection of snuff-boxes—of which he already had nearly two thousand rich specimens—were spells of more potency than the storming of the valiant little duchess was able to overcome, though spurred on by an ambitious desire of wielding the sceptre of the regency.

However, she had recently availed herself of an opportunity of giving vent to her outraged feelings; her prowess being exhibited in making war on the mirrors, furniture, and ornamental portions of her apartments in the Tuileries. M. le Duc, who was a

nephew of the duchess, having attained his majority, again applied for the superintendence of the king's education. The regent and his adviser, Dubois, hated Du Maine, and were glad to cast further disgrace upon him. The little king, then seven years old, was therefore made to repeat, at a *lit-de-justice*, that it was his royal will and pleasure Du Maine should be superseded. He was then ordered to resign, and appears to have been glad to do so.

Far otherwise the duchess. When informed that the apartment in the palace which the post gave a right to must be ceded to M. le Duc, her rage was boundless. "I will resign it," she at last exclaimed, "yes, I will give up the apartment." Snatching up a rich porcelain vase that stood too near at hand, she dashed it into the wood fire then blazing on the hearth. With the fire-irons she attacked the mirrors, smashed them, and injured the frames. Finding strength in her fury, she destroyed and damaged a large portion of furniture, dealing about blows with so much force and rapidity, that the work of demolition went on without any among the awe-stricken witnesses of it venturing to stay her hand. At length she succumbed to exhaustion, and was carried away by her attendants, leaving for the occupation of her successor a battle-ground strewn with the trophies of her victory.

This desperate little woman was then about thirty years of age. In height and figure Madame informs us she had the appearance of a child of ten. When Louis XIV. desired his son to choose a wife, and ordered M. le Prince to give him one of his daughters, Du Maine selected the Princess Anne-Louisè, because she was the fraction of an inch taller, or, rather, less

short, than her elder sister. She was not exactly a little fairy thing, or miniature Venus. The not unusual deformity of a displaced and enlarged shoulder was fatal to the symmetry of her slight figure. Her mouth was large, and she opened it widely, displaying, unfortunately, a very bad set of teeth. But she had fine eyes, a fair complexion, and light hair. She rouged very highly, as most ladies did. "Yet," adds Madame, "she might have passed muster had she not been insupportably malignant."

This malignant little sprite, when in Paris, was often to be found in the *salon* Lambert, on Tuesdays—very patronizing to the women, who were sufficiently obsequious; very gracious to the men, who extolled her wit and paid court to her as a beauty. This was especially the case before the death of Louis XIV.

The little duchess was then looking forward to be the dispenser of court favors. As a *quasi* queen, she would no doubt have ruled the court, the camp, and the nation generally with a very high hand. But not only were these flattering hopes dispelled—still further ignominy was cast on her husband, by the decree depriving him, though conceded to his brother, of the rank conferred upon him when legitimated.

The duke was content to retire into private life; but declined to concur in the decree, and consent to his own degradation in order to obtain certain promised concessions. He, however, would not openly resist his enemies. He is said to have feared the confiscation of a part of his immense wealth had he shown himself very refractory. The duchess was of course outrageous. "Nothing then is left to me," she said, "but the disgrace of having condescended to marry you." She thought as much of her rank as did Saint-

Simon himself; but with greater excuse for it. Retiring from Paris, she made diligent examination into the genealogies of all the bar-sinister offshoots of the old kings of France. Musty volumes and parchments lay open on her bed, and were scattered pell-mell about her chamber. So fully did the subject take possession of her mind, that she could turn her thoughts to no other. Her nights were sleepless, and Mdlle. Delaunay, who was then of the household of the duchess, was charged with the pleasant duty of reading her vivacious mistress to sleep. But she gave little heed to the romances and stories that had been selected—of course, for their somniferous qualities. In the very midst of some drowsy scene that ought to have closed her eyelids, she would startle her reader—herself nodding over her book—with some profound remark; showing that she still was perfectly wide awake, but had been musing only on the rights and privileges accorded to some brave Dunois, or other left-handed *Enfant de France*. We will leave her for the present to her genealogical studies, and to the treason, stratagems, and plots she is meditating.

## CHAPTER V.

Royal Academy of Music.—Opera, Paniers, and Masks.—“See Paris, and Die!”—Watteau’s Early Studies.—Costumes à la Watteau.—Bals de l’Opéra.—La Duchesse de Berri.—La Duchesse, en reine.—La Duchesse, en penitence.—Le Comte de Riom.—M<sup>de</sup>. de Maintenon’s Nieces.

“WE French,” said Saint-Foix, “are a singing and dancing people.” Yet for near twenty years Louis XIV., who in earlier days so delighted in displaying his agility before admiring crowds of spectators, had prevented his people, as far as was possible, from amusing themselves in the same lively way. His own dancing days were over; and his religion was less jubilant than that of King David of Israel. But, “times change, and manners with them.”

One of the first results of the Orleans rule was the revival of the taste for theatrical amusements. There were then but two theatres in Paris—the Théâtre Français and the Royal Academy of Music. Both had met, at least for some years, with but very languid support, and seemed in a fair way of having permanently to close their doors. The Academy still occupied the *Salle* of the Palais Royal, given by Louis XIV. to Lulli, on the death of Molière. Francine was now its nominal director, though the management, since 1712, had been actually carried on by a committee of creditors. The privileges originally granted to Lulli were continued to his successor, who was his son-in-law.

But the palmy days of court favor had passed away. The receipts of the Royal Academy fell off, until at length the expenses of management exceeded them in amount, and Francine found himself burdened with a debt of upwards of thirteen thousand pounds. Three representations were given weekly, and the *Salle* was always well filled. But it was comparatively small. A very large proportion, too, of the space in the *parterre* was occupied by the free seats of members of the royal household, while the boxes taken by the year, rented chiefly by the financier class, were remarkably spacious for the small number of persons supposed to have chairs in them. One lady, probably, with her enormous *paniers*, counted for three.

The city still took its tone from the court, and the court becoming yet more devout, the opera of the Academy, under the committee, continued to be a losing speculation. When ladies connected with the court perchance went to the theatre, to save appearances and avoid probable disfavor if recognized, they always wore masks. Unlet boxes and the seats at the disposal of the management were, as often as not, largely occupied by friends of certain singers and dancers, whose vanity was flattered by boundless applause, but not a *sou* was contributed towards their salaries. The Duc d'Orleans and his intimates were frequently present; but wherever they went was tabooed ground to the courtiers of Versailles.

Distinguished foreigners, and English travellers especially, in the early part of the eighteenth century, began to visit Paris more frequently than before, and of course they went to the Opera. The fame of Paris had spread far and wide as the "city of magnificence and pleasure." But, as often happens with what is

greatly bepraised, its reputation was much beyond its deserts, so far as concerned its outward aspect. The utmost that can be said for old Paris, in that respect, is that no European city could surpass it in dirt and discomfort, and in the squalid appearance of its narrow, dark, dirty streets. Its attractions were all within doors. The formal Englishman was pleased with the gayety, ease, and politeness of the French. The tastefully furnished apartments must have been charming to eyes accustomed to the stiff, unrelenting Calvinism (if such an application of the term be allowable) of the rigidly designed William III. and Queen Anne furniture.

"See Paris, and die!" the Parisians were accustomed to say. Die, indeed! What, by the pestilence, or by the dagger of the assassin—which was not an unfrequent occurrence? Better go to the Opera, and live, and rejoice at what you have seen there. For the eye was always gratified by the beauty of the scenery and the charmingly picturesque costumes of the dancers. All the world did not admire the music of Lulli. But every one was delighted with the productions of the fanciful genius of Watteau. It was he who painted the scenery and designed the dresses. In the painting-room of the Opera-house—as an untutored lad, assistant to a mediocre scene-painter—Watteau learned his art. It was there he perfected his style, after a short absence spent in the *atelier* of Mitayer, painting Madonnas, Magdalens, and saints by the dozen (then greatly in request) for three francs a week, with a daily mess of soup generously thrown into the bargain.

Poor Watteau!—in those early days of poverty and suffering were sown the seeds of consumption that

carried him off too soon. Just, too, as fortune had turned so smilingly towards him, and his "Venus embarking for the Isle of Cythère" had opened for him the door of the Academy of Painting; just when his pictures and panels were eagerly in demand; when every lady's ambition was to secure a Watteau-painted fan. The painter worked day and night, but death had already set his seal on him; and after seeking, of all climates in the world, relief in England, Watteau, in 1721, at the age of thirty-six, breathed his last. His natural genius was never directed by any great master of his art. He was almost self-taught. Connoisseurs have compared him, as a colorist, with Paul Veronese. If he did not exactly reproduce nature in his pictures, it was nature with a difference that was at least very charming. His costumes were truly costumes à la Watteau. They were of no period, no class; but were designed in the fairyland of the artist's fancy, and belonged exclusively to the graceful maidens and youthful shepherdesses who figured in the *ballets* and operatic *fêtes champêtres*.

What a pity that all the beauty of scenic effect, picturesque dress, and perfection in the arrangement of the operatic stage, should have been half lost to the audience by the wretched lighting up of tallow candles. When Law, the financier, was made Conseiller d'état by the regent, he gained further popularity with the pleasure-loving public of Paris, during his brief term of power, by substituting wax for tallow in the lighting of the Salle de l'Opéra. He is said to have done this at his own expense; but whether or not, the reform continued until the glaring, smoky oil-lamps were introduced. Some changes and improvements were made at the same time in the arrangement of the



boxes, and the Royal Academy of Music entered upon a more successful career.

It was then that the *bals de l'Opéra* were established. They were suggested by the Prince d'Auvergne, Comte de Bouillon, and the privilege of holding them was granted to the Academy of Music by the regent's letters patent. These balls, from that time to this, have maintained an evil reputation, though they were proposed with a view of counteracting the disorderly scenes which took place at such assemblies when held in unauthorized places. At the opera balls, a military guard did the duty of police, and all brawling and outward indecorum were to be checked by a rigid *surveillance*. But the regent, himself; the Duc de Noailles, Ministre de Finance; M. de Rouille, Conseiller d'état, and one or two others holding high offices in the government, so far forgot what they owed to society and to their own position, as to appear at these balls after having indulged too freely in the pleasures of the table. At the opera, the ladies no longer wore masks, but at the opera balls they wore both mask and domino, which sufficed, charitably or otherwise, to cover a multitude of sins. Irregularity of conduct, therefore, instead of receiving a check, met with encouragement from these balls under distinguished patronage. Madame de Maintenon, having heard from her niece of the *bals de l'opera*, writes: "I am afraid of these balls, though they tell me perfect order is observed. The regent and his presidents do not dance at them."

The Duchesse de Berri, eldest daughter of the regent, was a constant frequenter of the Salle de l'Opéra. She was in mourning for her husband when Louis XIV. died, and had resolved to shorten by one half

the usual period of wearing it. Having done so as regarded the duke, she persuaded the regent to curtail, in the same proportion, the mourning for the king. The tearful time of black and violet being past, the duchess, whose fancy it was to play the queen during the regency, appointed for herself four ladies-in-waiting. In one of the grandest of the royal carriages with six gayly caparisoned horses, she then set out, splendidly dressed, on a royal progress through the good city of Paris. A company of guards preceded her, followed by a grand flourish of trumpets and a clashing and banging of cymbals. Great, indeed, was the sensation. Heads out of every window; women and children trooping out from every *porte cochère*; and every one inquiring of his neighbor who this royal lady could be. Those who did not recognize Madame de Berri supposed this pretentious personage to be the Duchesse de Lorraine, the regent's sister, then in Paris with her husband and her husband's *chère amie*, to do homage for the duke's duchy of Bar.

In the evening, early visitors to the opera were surprised to see a *daïs* with canopy of crimson velvet prepared. Presently, in grand state, arrived the Duchesse de Berri. Having taken her seat, four of the ladies and four gentlemen of her newly appointed household grouped themselves gracefully around her. The rest of her suite took up their position in the pit, while her guards remained in attendance. The regent was inclined to laugh at and to tolerate this freak. Not so the public. Not so the ladies of either of the sections into which society was then divided—the *très respectable* of the old court; the *peu respectable* of the new. The outcry was general. Friends and foes alike, even the loyal band of *roués*, protested, and the regent

was compelled to put a stop to folly that threatened very serious results.

The Duchesse de Berri was suspected, unjustly perhaps, of having poisoned her husband; but the irregularities of her conduct had alienated from her all sympathy and respect. Her annoyance on this occasion was extreme. For consolation she flew to the convent of the Carmelites, and spent a day or two there, as she was accustomed to do after a course of dissipation. That short season of retirement and prayer, confession and absolution, cleared the conscience and gave tone to the nerves. Erring ladies left the comfortable quarters provided for them in that rigid monastic retreat, again to plunge into the whirlpool of pleasure, with the certainty of shortly reappearing at the convent gates, as fair penitents with a fresh burden of sins to be relieved of.

On again visiting the opera, the Duchesse de Berri went incognita, in a very plain carriage belonging to the Comte de Riom, and occupied a small grated box, where she could see without being seen. She had privately married this Comte de Riom, disregarding the fact of his being a Knight of Malta, which he had become at her instigation, though his family had intended him for the Church. Singularly enough, he was grand-nephew of the Duc de Lauzun—still living, and approaching his ninetieth year—who, fifty years before, had privately married another Mdlle. de Montpensier. The parallel went further. For with the same harshness as Lauzun had treated “la grande Mademoiselle,” the Comte de Riom now behaved towards the duchess. In the Luxembourg Palace, and probably in the same splendid apartment that the Duc de Lauzun had once occupied, now dwelt the

Comte de Riom; the duchess being, as stated by Duclos, "an absolute slave to his caprices"—just as Mademoiselle had been infatuated with Lauzun. Yet the count appears to have been a less attractive person than his uncle. "He was ugly," says Duclos; "face covered with pimples; polite to all the world; insolent toward the princess."

What with extreme jealousy on her side, extravagance and free living on his, scenes that are not pleasing to dwell upon often occurred between them. In the correspondence of Madame de Caylus with Madame de Maintenon during her last years at St. Cyr, the duchess is often alluded to. Alluded to only. They probably feared to write openly; for Madame de Caylus, whose pension had been reduced in amount—like all those granted by the late king, except that of Madame de Maintenon, which the regent paid regularly as well as in full—had an apartment in the Luxembourg, which she occupied by favor of the Duchesse de Berri. One seems to detect in the letters of Madame de Caylus that much is withheld of doings at the Luxembourg; probably because she has had a larger share in them than she would perhaps care to acknowledge.

"I hear," writes Madame de Maintenon, "that you and Madame de Noailles (her other niece) are giving suppers at the Luxembourg. The expense they involve, and the disorder, I am told, that prevails at them, cause me extreme pain. The new pensions are rarely paid. Distress is prevalent; all classes are suffering from it. Yet every day we hear that the regent has made some new gift to his mistresses, or confirmed to them some claim on the taxes. Such an

employment of the public money excites many murmurs and complaints.

“The young king, they tell me, is very obstinate; but he will grow out of that as he grows older. The teachings of M. de Fréjus (Fleury) and our Maréchal (Villeroi) will, I trust, supply the remedy for it. He has sent me his portrait, painted, or rather daubed (*‘barbouillé’*) by himself. The Maréchal has promised me that he will not take him again to see Madame de Berri at the Luxembourg.”

## CHAPTER VI.

Return of the Italian Troupe.—Les Troupes Foraines.—Vaudeville and Opéra Comique.—Winter and Summer Fairs.—Théâtre de la Foire suppressed.

THE Italian comedians, since their banishment from Paris in 1699, had frequently solicited permission to return. But the king was inexorable. A piece called "La Fausse Prude," containing allusions to Madame de Maintenon and the sanctimonious court of Versailles, or which the audience had interpreted as such and received with much mirth, had given him great offence. Denial of any such intention availed not. The theatre was closed; the Italians were driven from the hôtel; the lieutenant of police locked the doors, put the keys in his pocket; and the troop received orders to leave the country immediately. Venturing to appeal to the king against a decree so harsh and so ruinous to them, he remarked—"They had nothing to complain of. They were able to return to Italy in their carriages, though when invited to France they had made the journey on foot."

However, in 1718, the Italians returned. The Councillor of State, Rouille, persuaded the regent to allow them to take up their old quarters in the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and to assume the appellation of "Comédiens du Regent." Biancotelli only, of the original troop, came with them; for nineteen years had elapsed since their expulsion. But the new troop soon became es-

tablished favorites. They were not only clever actors, but able to extend their popularity (Italian being little understood by the *bourgeoisie*) by giving alternate performances of the same pieces in Italian and French.\* The Théâtre Italien, thus becoming partly French, proved a formidable rival to the Royal Academy, also to the Opéra Comique.

The players who had given the latter title to their performances were called *troupes foraines*, and might be classed as a company of strollers, having no recognized local habitation but the temporary theatres erected on a portion of the ground where the summer and winter fairs of St. Germain and St. Laurent were held. A desperate struggle the directors had had for some years to keep the troop together, and to maintain their footing in the face of the various decrees issued for their suppression. That they succeeded in doing so at all was probably owing, as Saint-Foix † says, to the fact that, licentious though they were, they represented the wit and vivacity characteristic of the French, as no other troop did, and were largely patronized in consequence. But the Théâtre Français had obtained a decree that silenced their eloquent tongues, and permitted them to play pantomime only. This they endeavored, for a year or two, partly to evade by the comical device of unrolling long slips of paper, on which were written, as sometimes one sees in caricatures, the speeches they were forbidden to

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\* Louis Riccoboni, the author of four successful French plays and several critical and historical works connected with theatrical subjects, was one of these Italian comedians. Madame Riccoboni, whose romances were so popular about the middle of the century, was his wife.

† "Essais Historiques."

speak, and which were intended to make clear to the audience what looks and gestures, however eloquent, might have failed to convey.

But this clumsy method of giving a play, after having been once or twice laughed at, became wearisome, both to actors and audience, and eventually was given up. The directors of the troop then entered into an arrangement with the Academy of Music, which had the power of suppressing musical entertainments, and for a good round sum bought the privilege of playing vaudeville and comic opera during the fairs of St. Germain and St. Laurent. The new entertainment provided was not remarkably refined. But the pieces were sparkling and witty; no less attractive to the court of the regent than to the throng of sellers and buyers who came from far and near to these fairs, for business or pleasure. A thriving trade they carried on there. The good housewives supplied themselves with linens and woollens, and other useful goods, and the itinerent merchants took away "articles de Paris" for the provinces. Everything was sold but firearms and books; but veracious lives of saints, and accounts of well-attested miracles, were excepted from the prohibition laid on the latter. The ground on which the booths stood belonged to the neighboring monasteries, and was leased out by the monks in small plots. An open shop, with a small room over it, was built on each, and disposed in long lines under *halles*; the woodwork of which at the St. Germain fair was much admired for its tasteful, if somewhat rudely executed sculpture. At the St. Laurent, or summer fair, an avenue of chestnut trees formed a shady promenade, and the shops were erected on either side of it.

The theatres occupied a large space of ground,



They were not of the travelling-caravan type of the Old English Richardson days; but were built up to be fixtures on the ground as long as the fairs lasted. And as an extension of time was frequently asked, and, bringing good profits to the monks, as frequently granted, the two fairs, from being originally held on the fête days only of St. Germain and St. Laurent, now divided between them the greater part of the year. The shopkeepers gradually left to attend other fairs; but the comic opera was by no means in a hurry to bring its season to a close. Le Sage, the author of "Gil Blas;" Dorneval; Fuzelier; and the witty and dissolute Piron, wrote the vaudevilles and songs, which, with the lively music and dancing, so pleased the Parisians that the audience soon became too large for the theatre. The directors, therefore, proposed to erect one on a larger scale.

The Théâtre Français, however, had experienced a great falling off in its receipts. The actors were also not a little indignant at the preference shown for this *troupe foraine*, at the expense of "Les comédiens du roi." Should Piron and Le Sage be allowed to cast Molière, Racine, and Corneille into the shade? A representation on the subject was made in high quarters, which resulted in the suppression, in 1718, of the *spirituel*, but licentious, Théâtre de la Foire. The directors appealed to the Parliament; but the Parliament only confirmed the decree. Yet, tenacious of life, the Théâtre de la Foire for a number of years contrived to exist through alternate revivals and suppressions; until comic opera, having assumed "a tone more decent," though none the less *spirituel*, forsook the scene of its early successes, and established itself in Paris with *éclat*.

## CHAPTER VII.

Michel Baron.—Bembourg, as Néron.—Horace and Camille.—Adrienne Le Couvreur.—Ths. Corneille's "Comte d'Essex."—Baron Returns to the Stage.—A Cæsar; a Baron; a Roscius.—A Second Triumphant Début.—The First Baron of France.—The Grand Prêtre, in "Athalie."—The Prince and the Actor.—"Mon Pauvre Boyron."—An Actress's Dinners and Suppers.—Results of Popularity.—Voltaire and his Nurse.—Galland's "Arabian Nights."

It seems singular that a place of amusement of an inferior grade, which, without interference or remonstrance, had been allowed to exist during the latter years of the reign of Louis XIV., should have been suppressed under the regency. And, more surprising still, because of the need of "a purification of the repertory; because respectable people could no longer endure such pieces." Its toleration at a time of supposed general piety has been accounted for as being a necessary concession to the populace, "to divert the people from their misery." A sad confession that manners, as M. Bungener remarks, needed but little change to become openly what, secretly, they can scarcely be said to have ceased to be—bad.

During the temporary eclipse of the Théâtre de la Foire and its Opéra Comique, which had proved so attractive a rival to the legitimate drama, one star of the Théâtre Français disappeared. Another brilliant one, however, arose, yet not to take the place of the former, who was Bembourg; the latter, Mdlle.

Adrienne Le Couvreur. Bembourg had made a great reputation in the course of the twenty-nine years of his theatrical career. Yet it would seem to have been owing less to superior ability or genius on his part than to the general mediocrity of histrionic talent at that period.

The great Michel Baron withdrew from the stage in the same year that Bembourg made his *début*. He was at the very height of his fame, and comparatively young, not more than thirty-nine. He had conceived an intense disgust for a profession which, however excellent his conduct and private character might be, branded him as an outcast before God and man. Strange inconsistency, too; that which, as a profession, brought a curse upon *him* both for time and eternity, was with impunity pursued as an amusement by royalty, by great lords and great ladies. They might not only have theatres in their hôtels, as most of them had, but it was permitted to them to dance and sing, and to perform plays in public, as they often did, yet without derogating from dignity, without imperilling salvation. These were things that Baron found "hard to be understood." He therefore withdrew in 1691, and left a clear stage for Bembourg.

Bembourg was one of those actors who "tear a passion to tatters." For anger, he exhibited ferocity, and stormed, raged, and shrieked rather than fretted his hour on the stage. Le Sage satirized him severely. But Le Sage was an unfriendly and partial critic. The vaudeville writer of the Théâtre de la Foire could hardly be expected to find praise for the shouting and screaming of Corneille by the actors of the Théâtre Français, who did their best to put down comic opera.

Bembourg, as Néron in "Britannicus," is said to have been so furious that it taxed the strongest nerves to witness his performance. He yelled and raved so fearfully, that women were compelled to leave the theatre. Le Mazurier relates that, on one occasion, when "Les Horaces" was given, the imprecation scene was made so terrible by Bembourg's fury, that Mdlle. Duclos, who played Camille, appeared to be quite overpowered by it. She fled across the stage with so much precipitancy that, ere she could reach the side scenes, she fell.

Horace, then, descending from the sublime heights of his tragic rage to become, for the moment, only Bembourg the actor, sank thus to the depths of the ridiculous. For, instead of continuing the scene by turning the accident to account and stabbing Camille, there and then (which the play-going Abbé Nadal considered the singularity of the *contretemps* would have justified), Horace took off his hat,—of course he was in full court dress,—and politely bowing to Camille, gave his hand to assist her to rise. He was then under the necessity, as soon as Camille was again on her feet, of getting up a new whirlwind of passion, and renewing his pursuit in order to assassinate her behind the scenes. Tragedy thus became comedy, and the audience that probably would have applauded an undesigned, therefore allowable, transgression of the rules of the French drama, laughed heartily at the incident. Bembourg had to decide, on the instant, between seeming atrocity and obvious absurdity, and opinions differed as to the judiciousness of his choice. It afforded a theme for conversation in the *salons*, and gave rise to much vivacious discussion. Bembourg was a striking example of the truth of the maxim,

“Though one cannot strike truly, he may succeed by striking violently.”

Some months before he had made up his mind to repose on his laurels and enjoy his theatrical pension, Mdlle. Adrienne Le Couvreur appeared at the Théâtre Français, making a brilliant *début* as Monime in the “Mithridate” of Racine. The *Salle* was crowded in every part, for she came to Paris with a great provincial reputation. After this performance it was generally allowed, even by the critics of the *parterre*, that fame had rather under- than over-stated the merits of this great actress; and her subsequent appearances confirmed this decision.

Her voice was full and melodious; her delivery perfect. To many of the audience Corneille and Racine even appeared new, and the beauty of their language revealed for the first time; so naturally yet so forcibly were the words uttered which hitherto had been monotonously chanted, shrieked, or declaimed. Few actresses have approached Mdlle. Le Couvreur in the difficult art of listening. Her expressive countenance displaying, as the speaker addressed her, the varying emotions of her mind with remarkable distinctness.

She was slight in figure, and rather above the middle height. Her eyes were dark and brilliant, and her face more remarkable for great intelligence and expressiveness than regular beauty of feature. Her gestures were graceful, and an idea may be formed of the dignity of her acting from the words of La Motte, who, on entering the *salon* of Mdlle. de Lambert after having witnessed the play of “Le Comte d'Essex,” Mdlle. Le Couvreur being Elizabeth, exclaimed with enthusiasm, “I have seen to-night a queen among the actors.” As Phédre and Cornélie, those who have

most studied the annals of the stage believe that her representation of those characters still remains unsurpassed.

At that time the *dramatis personæ* of the classical plays of Corneille and Racine wore *paniers*, powder, and patches, and the full court costume of the French nobility, which scarcely had changed since the days of Henri IV. Nearly half the stage was occupied by privileged spectators, who sat on benches or strutted about at their will, and appeared to have some part assigned them in the performance. The buzzing conversation they kept up, their coming and going and changing of places, were serious distractions and drawbacks; to which was added the semi-darkness of the tallow-candle-lighted *Salle*. An actor or actress must have had wonderful talent to hold captive, in spite of them, the attention of an audience disposed, before all things, to be critical. This, Mdlle. Le Couvreur appears to have been equal to. She had also the good fortune, soon after the retirement of Bembourg, to derive both artistic support and instruction from the return of Michel Baron to the stage.

Twenty-nine years had elapsed since his retreat. Old playgoers who remembered him in those days of his prime, deplored his decision to risk the great reputation he had retired with by reappearing in his old age, and before an audience that knew him only by the records of former triumphs. But Baron was extremely sensitive on the subject of age. No faded *belle* could be more so. He would have quarrelled with his best and dearest friend, should he have ventured to suggest age as an obstacle to his purpose. He had also the most exalted idea of his own talents, fortunately with good reason. "Every century," he

said, "could produce a Cæsar, but it had taken twenty centuries to produce a Baron. For, since the time of Roscius, he knew but of one—himself."

Baron chose Cinna for his second *début*. Fifty years before, he had taken the town by storm in the same character. The announcement of his reappearance in it was received with enthusiasm. The regent was present, and every nook and corner of the *Salle* whence a glimpse of the actor could be obtained, or the sound of his voice heard, had its occupant. The French are rarely very noisily demonstrative in the expression of their approval at the theatre, when listening to the masterpieces of their great dramatists. And rapt attention is certainly a far greater compliment to an actor than the vulgar uproar by which the frequenters of English theatres are wont to express their satisfaction; having probably not listened to a line of the speech that seems so much to delight them, and not always being capable of feeling either its beauties or defects, if they have.

Eagerly, then, but in breathless expectation, did the vast audience await the re-entrance on the scene of the veteran actor of near threescore and ten. He came. It may be said that he came, saw, and conquered. For there was a murmur when he appeared that denoted both approval and astonishment, besides a prodigious fluttering of fans amongst the ladies. Ladies of every shade of philosophy and morality, those who remembered the Baron of days of yore and dared to confess it, as well as those who did not; ladies of the old court, of the new court, of the *haute bourgeoisie*, and even of the *petite* (these last, commonplace people who had the effrontery to appear there with their husbands). However, all thought the occa-

sion one of sufficient importance to be graced by their presence.

“Why! he is the handsomest cavalier in the world!” exclaims the Duchesse de Berri to Madame de Caylus, as she peeps out of her grated box. For Baron, with firmness of gait, and erect as a man in the very summer of life, presents himself, as of old, with a dignity of bearing that even the *Grand Monarque* at the height of his glory might have envied.

Baron was not only the greatest comedian of his time (playing tragedy and the higher range of comedy equally well), but he was considered the handsomest man of his day, and probably none surpassed him in vanity. Contrary to the custom of the period, his habits were regular and abstemious, by which means he retained the vigor of an excellent constitution, and his personal advantages unimpaired, to an unusually late period of life. His fine figure, grand manners, and extremely handsome face, of course had some influence in securing the favor of the ladies. But usually he was haughty and overbearing towards his own sex, who tolerated him only on account of his immense talent, which all felt compelled to acknowledge. This talent he evidently still possessed, and without any apparent diminution of the physical qualities that gave added interest to the expression of it. He passed through the ordeal of representing the haughty Cinna with an *éclat* worthy of the great reputation acquired in his younger days; proving his right still to claim the appellation of “the first Baron of France.” Baron and Mdlle. Le Couvreur, together, were irresistible, and the Théâtre Français flourished.

The real motive of Baron's return to the stage was his extraordinary enthusiasm for his art. The exag-



geration and ranting of Bembourg drove him frantic, and to his evil example he attributed in a great degree the decadence he perceived in the style of French acting. As soon, therefore, as Bembourg retired, Baron resolved to afford the younger comedians the benefit of his experience and example. Mdlle. Le Couvreur, who at one time seemed likely to drop into the monotonous sing-song she so continually heard around her, was saved from it by Baron's warnings and instructions. Mdlle. Duclos, no longer young, had fallen too irretrievably into this vicious habit to reform her style thoroughly, but she was improved by continual reminders. Mdlle. Belmond, and other young actresses and actors of the troop, were similarly indebted to Baron.

In the High Priest in "Athalie" he is said to have been perfectly sublime—"As sublime in his acting," says a French writer, "as Racine in his verses." "He never declaimed tragedy; he spoke it, and was tender or passionate, according to the character he assumed. His voice was sonorous, just, and flexible; his tones energetic and varied. His silence, his looks; the varying expression of his countenance, revealing the changing emotions of the mind; his attitudes, his gestures—sparingly employed, yet with perfect art—completing the unfailing effect of an utterance inspired by the sensations of nature. He proved that talent, such as his, knew no limits, and was unaffected by age.

As when he retired from the stage, so when he returned, the motive assigned for it was not generally accepted as the true one. But it was well known that he was not needy. He was in receipt of two pensions, and possessed private property. He had been very liberally paid during his retreat for teaching princes

and princesses to act, and for superintending their performances at the theatre of the palace of Versailles. He always went to and from the Théâtre Français in his own carriage. On one occasion his coachman and servants quarrelled and fought with those of the Prince de Conti—such brawls were frequent amongst the coachmen and lackeys of those days. Baron's servants appear to have been as arrogant as their master, and having had the worst of this encounter, complained to him loudly of their opponents. Happening to meet the prince in the theatre, Baron mentioned the occurrence. And using the term "Your people and mine," requested him to reprimand his servants.

The prince, one of the regent's *roués*, thought this unpardonable familiarity. He replied, "But, my poor Boyron, what do you want me to say? And how the devil did you take it into your head to have 'people'?" The *amour propre* of the actor must have been very severely wounded, no less at being *tutoyé* even by a prince, than addressed as "my poor Boyron." Boyron was the original name of his family, but his father, also an actor, and accustomed to play in the theatrical entertainments of the court of Louis XIII., was frequently spoken to by the king, who always called him Baron. This name he assumed, his son and other members of his family continued to write themselves Baron; and it was sometimes said in jest that the elder Michel Baron had been ennobled by Louis XIII. He was a tolerably good actor, but the real talent of this theatrical family centred wholly in Michel Baron, his son. He made the name illustrious in histrionic annals, and thus secured to all who bore it a certain degree of favor and tolerance, even when evincing but very mediocre abilities.

Baron was often well received in aristocratic circles. He could entirely throw off the comedian and be witty and agreeable. But if he felt that he was patronized and not welcomed as a man of the great world, he could assume an air that greatly disconcerted his would-be patron. He probably took ample revenge on the supercilious Prince de Conti, if there is truth in the anecdote. Anecdotes of Baron are numerous. His great presence of mind was often very serviceable to him on the stage—for envy frequently sought means of embarrassing him, which it was not at all easy to do. His intimacy with La Motte-Houdart, whose four tragedies owed their success to Baron's impersonation of the principal characters, opened to him the *salon* of Madame de Lambert.

In that *salon* Mdlle. Le Couvreur also, as we learn incidentally from her letters, was sometimes a guest. It may be inferred from it that the "*salon très respectable*" was a less straitlaced assembly than might have been supposed. Either from a friendly interest in her, or possibly from mere curiosity, as she had a great reputation for wit, Adrienne was much sought after in society, by the ladies no less than the gentlemen. She herself gave dinners and suppers, and duchesses went to partake of them. She was the fashion, and she and her guests were neither better nor worse than the age they lived in. It is probable that the society of that period was not more dissolute than when, in the preceding century, it was indispensable that every lady should have her "*galant et honnête homme*," and a train of adorers under the name of "*amants inoffensifs*."

Referring to the invitations she receives, Mdlle. Le Couvreur remarks: "If, from indisposition or other unavoidable cause, I fail to meet a party of ladies,

probably, all of them unknown to me, 'You perceive,' one says, 'she affected the *merveilleuse*.' 'Ah,' remarks another, 'tis because we have no titles—our husbands hold no appointments at court.' If I do go among them," she continues, "and happen to be serious—one cannot always be lively with a number of people one has never set eyes on before—they whisper among themselves, raise their eyebrows, shrug their shoulders. 'This, then, is the young person who they say is so witty?' asks one. 'Remark how disdainful she is. You cannot please her,' says another, 'unless you know Latin and Greek. She is one of Madame de Lambert's set.'" And thus Mdlle. Adrienne found it difficult to satisfy the people who were so anxious to make a lioness of her.

She succeeded better perhaps with the gentlemen than with the ladies. Voltaire, amongst others, threw himself at her feet, as he had a habit of doing to women he cared to pay court to. She played the heroines of his earlier tragedies, and studied her parts under his direction. Adrienne Le Couvreur was really a good, kind creature; giving all her spare cash to one admirer, selling her diamonds to supply the needs of another, and proving her friendship for Voltaire by courageously nursing him through the small-pox—a disease attended in his case with the usual disfigurement. Before that misfortune, Voltaire is said to have been fairly good-looking. To beguile the weary hours of a slow convalescence, Adrienne was accustomed to sit by his couch and read for his amusement the "Arabian Nights."\*

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\* M. Galland, the French translator of the "Contes Arabes," then in everybody's hands, had lately died in Paris. He was well

known as an Oriental scholar, and much esteemed in literary society. Shortly before his death a party of young men, returning home in a rather hilarious mood from a supper, stopped, with their lantern-bearers, before M. Galland's house in the Rue Dauphine. Terrible deeds were of nightly occurrence in the streets of Paris in those good old times; and the loud knocking at the door, and the calling for M. Galland on a cold, dark, wintry night greatly alarmed the household. His servant at last cautiously opened a window, and inquired the meaning of this disturbance, and who the nocturnal rioters were. They want M. Galland, they tell him. Presently Galland appears at the window in nightcap and dressing-gown. "Well, gentlemen, what do you want?" he inquires of these noisy visitors. Parodying the phrase with which he begins each of the thousand and one chapters of the "Arabian Nights," they reply, "M. Galland, if you are not asleep, tell us some of those stories you know." M. Galland's window is immediately closed with a bang, and the young men, having had their foolish joke out, reassemble their lantern-bearers and depart. The misfortune was that M. Galland was not very well, and the chill he got by being roused from his bed on a cold January night, if it did not actually cause his death, was supposed to have hastened it, as he died very soon after, probably a victim to the fame of his book.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Racine's Academic Address.—A Political Intrigante.—The Spanish Plot.—Arrest of La Duchesse du Maine.—Confessions and Apologies.—A Traitor in the Camp.—A General Lover.—The Eye's Eloquence.—A Persevering Lover.—Results of Gallantry.—La Duchesse de Richelieu.—The Duc de Modena.—A Desponding Bride.—A Heartless Lover.—A Learned Academician.—A Noble Badaud.

THERE is perhaps no period of French history of which it is more difficult to give, in a very succinct form, a clear idea of the general state of society, than that of the regency of Philippe, Duc d'Orleans. It was a period crowded with incidents, various as numerous. It was the awakening from torpor and gloom to a life of unrestrained gayety, folly, and vice, and the re-establishing of society under new forms. Political intrigue then found a home in the *salons*, whence it had been banished since the time of the Fronde, but where now the philosophic spirit began also to develop itself. Montesquieu had published his witty satire, the "Lettres Persanes;" and the influence of Voltaire's sarcastic pen was beginning to be felt. Literature, which under Louis XIV. confined itself chiefly to gathering laurels in the fields of poesy and the drama, now ventured on assailing the government.

When Racine was installed in his academic arm-chair, he told his learned brethren, in his discourse on that occasion, that their greatest incentive to diligent

continuance of their efforts to perfect the French language should be to make it more and more worthy to celebrate the praises of Louis XIV. One is pained to know that so great a genius could thus servilely abase himself, and that he could suggest no worthier theme for a language he had so nobly and eloquently otherwise employed. Voltaire might well say, "Racine was more poet than philosopher."

The philosophers of the new republic of letters took a far different view of the subjects best suited for the display of French eloquence, as well as of their own position in the social scale. They no longer cared to seek the patronage of the fashionable world. Rather they stood aloof, and held reunions amongst themselves, claiming, as *savants* and philosophers, to be received as a distinguished section of society. Such consideration can hardly be said to have been already accorded to Voltaire; but by audacity, tact, and talent he had conquered it for himself. Many prejudices had yet to be overcome before rank and wealth could receive literary distinction as its equal. But the barriers fell by degrees before the teachers of new doctrines, and the spread of new opinions—destined by and by entirely to overturn the old organization of things.

Chief among female political *intrigantes* of this period was the Duchesse du Maine. That she, a princess of the blood, should have wedded a man contented to sit quietly down to his studies, and to the collecting of objects of art under the stigma of degraded rank, was a burning thought to this high-souled little woman. The receptions at Sceaux; the private theatricals, in which she figured with so much *éclat*; the madrigals addressed to her, sung or recited in her honor—all were now powerless to charm. Her *salon*

in Paris became the resort of all who thought they had cause to complain of the government of the regency. The disaffected formed a numerous party, and to further their own views lent their aid to the furtherance of the scheme of the duchess. The result was the so-called Spanish plot. Its object was to induce Philip V. to invade France, to secure, if possible, the person of the Duc d'Orleans, to claim the regency of the kingdom himself, and of course reinstate the duchess in all those rights and privileges of royal rank she had been deprived of.

Great pains were taken to conceal this stratagem from the duke; and as his attention was absorbed by literary pursuits, and love of retirement often took him from Paris to Sceaux, it was not difficult to do so. The scheme was well on its way towards realization. The Spanish ambassador, Prince de Cellamare, and Philip's first minister, Cardinal Alberoni, were deeply engaged in it. Philip himself, more frequently mad than sane, liked the idea of being regent of that France he loved so much. In his fits of despondency he regarded himself as a usurper of the Spanish throne, lamented his expatriation, often determined to abdicate, and always cherished the hope of revisiting France.

But if the Duc du Maine's eyes were sealed, other and more vigilant ones were open. Espionage was the rule of the French Government. It was the only duty the police executed with regularity and perseverance. Le Comte d'Argenson (to whom the *sobriquet* of "*Le Damné*" was given, because of his repulsive countenance) had for nineteen years been at the head of the department, and had trained his secret agents to an extraordinary degree of perfection. The eyes of Hé-



rault, his successor, had been for some time on the duchess. Part of her secret had transpired in the *salon* of Madame de Tencin, an *intrigante* also, and *amie intime* of Dubois—no longer Abbé, but, to the disgrace of the regent, elevated to the Archbishopric of Cambrai, and now Minister of Foreign Affairs. The unusual stir at the Embassy, occasioned by the despatching of emissaries to the Spanish Court, was also remarked by the vigilant lieutenant of police. A seizure of papers took place, and one of the messengers was stopped at Poitiers. On the 29th of December, 1718, the duchess, to her dismay, was arrested in Paris, and conveyed to the citadel of Dijon. The duke was found very harmlessly occupied in his study at Sceaux, but was sent to the Château de Dourlens. Mdlle. Delaunay shared the prison of the duchess, and several other members of the duke's household, as well as some military partisans of Spain, were confined in the Bastille.

This "*abominable conspiracy*"—thus it was proclaimed throughout the land—ended in "confessions and apologies" on the part of the duchess, who, after two years' imprisonment, was allowed to return to Sceaux. It was vainly sought to inculcate the duke, much as the regent and M. le Duc desired it. The latter especially is said to have felt towards him "an antipathy like that which some persons have for certain reptiles or species of vermin." Against their will, then, he also was liberated, and without any restriction as to his place of residence. But he refused to join the duchess at Sceaux; resenting, as much as it was in his apathetic nature to resent, the two years' imprisonment to which her schemes had subjected him.

But the little duchess on this point would not give

way; though the duke held out for some time against both her commands and entreaties. He had, however, been accustomed to obey; and as she had resolved on having him back at Sceaux, which was his favorite retreat, he at last yielded to her wishes and returned. She also succeeded in making her peace with the regent, who good-naturedly assured her that he would forget altogether what had passed.

There yet remained, however, one culprit in the Bastille—one who had been so deeply and treasonably concerned in this terrible plot that the regent declared he must lose his head. "He has done enough," he exclaimed, "to forfeit four heads if he had them!"

"Four of the handsomest heads in France have not the beauty of his one!" was the energetic reply. Surely such nonsense could have been uttered only by a very young lady.

But the regent was by no means moved by it to pity. "Handsome or not," he said, "it is owned by a worthless person—a disturber of the peace of the kingdom, and a traitor to his country." If he had added, "He has supplanted me in the good graces of several of the ladies of the court," he would have revealed what stung him to the quick in this gentleman's behavior quite as much as the part he had taken in the Spanish affair. It was, however, no less an affair of treason than the having promised Cardinal Alberoni to deliver Bayonne, where this officer's regiment was in garrison, into the hands of the Spanish troops, should Philip determine to invade France.

This handsome cavalier, now in the Bastille for the third time, was no other than the young Duc de Richelieu. He is said to have joined the duchess's party from annoyance that no influential post in the govern-

ment had yet been given to him. But the regent disliked him, and Richelieu took his revenge by making a point of stepping in between him and his mistresses. He had not the power of conferring titles upon them and extensive estates, or of making over to their use certain items of the taxes; but he had the advantage of being but twenty-three, while the regent was forty-six. He was exceedingly handsome, too, and very seductive, but perfectly heartless and thoroughly unprincipled. He squandered his income freely enough, and, though without a particle of feeling, he could assume with success the *rôle* of the despairing, passionate lover.

He had succeeded not long before in gaining, clandestinely, of course, the affections of Mdlle. de Charolais, sister of Monsieur le Duc; and his conquests in the royal houses he greatly piqued himself upon. She was very young and exceedingly pretty. Her eyes were beautiful, and so remarkably lustrous that she was recognized by them when wearing a mask. Mdlle. de Valois, one of the regent's daughters, a very handsome girl, had also attracted him greatly, when she made her *début* at a court ball given to celebrate the visit to Paris of the Duchesse de Lorraine. The young duke was almost in love with her; he decidedly admired her, and determined she should know it. It was difficult. But that gave zest and piquancy to his purpose. It had been difficult to make Mdlle. de Charolais understand that her smile or frown was life or death to him. He was an adept in that "eloquence, twin-born of thought," the eloquent language of the eyes. But so was the keen-sighted Madame de Prie, the "*amie intime*," as it was customary to say, of M. le Duc; and any openly displayed attentions to Mdlle.

de Charolais would have been very unceremoniously resented by her brother.

But Richelieu had evaded suspicion, and won the young princess's heart. He has now a new conquest to achieve, many obstacles to overcome. *Mdlle. de Valois* has elderly and careful attendants, and appears to be vigilantly guarded. From this circumstance, it may be observed, in passing, one is willing to believe that the conduct and character of the regent's daughters have usually been described with much exaggeration. Mere folly, doubtless, has frequently been magnified into vice, owing to the unfortunate mania that prevailed in the court of the regent, and far beyond that circle, of assuming an air of reckless depravity as a protest against the hypocritical piety of the old court of Versailles.

But to return to Richelieu. To accomplish his object, he had to bribe, to persuade, to make love to serving-women; to assume numerous disguises; to write, or to get written, love-letters—tender, imploring, passionate, despairing—and to tax his poor brain to invent methods for their safe delivery to the princess. At every court fête, ball, or concert, the Duc de Richelieu was sure to be present; but not always *Mdlle. de Valois*. Though she now comprehended that the perfumed notes which reached her hands hidden in roses or other flowers—so frequently lying on her writing-desk, her embroidery-frame, or toilet-table, and placed there she knew not how—were missives from the handsome young duke, whose despairing, languishing gaze she so often encountered, and replied to with a burning blush.

At length an interview took place. The lovers met in the apartment of one of the officials of the house-

hold, whose services Richelieu had secured. Many stolen meetings followed; the duke always in some new disguise. The jealous suspicions of *Mdlle. de Charolais*, however, led to the discovery of this intimacy.

Richelieu had but recently left the Bastille after a three weeks' detention there; the cause of his imprisonment being a desperate encounter with swords between him and the *Comte de Gare*—at mid-day, in Paris, in the *Rue St. Thomas du Louvre*—the result of a violent quarrel concerning an affair of gallantry. It happened at that time that the King of Sardinia made proposals for the hand of *Mdlle. de Valois*. It was therefore desirable, as the regent was willing to accede to them, to hush up the princess's love affair. Richelieu, in consequence, escaped another visit to the Bastille, but was ordered to join his regiment at Bayonne. Madame, however, in her correspondence with the German courts, related the incident. It was repeated, commented upon, and exaggerated, until the tale reached Piedmont, and with all its additions and embellishments came to the ears of the Sardinian king, who forthwith hastened to withdraw his proposal of marriage.

The regent was naturally much incensed, and it being immediately afterwards discovered that Richelieu was implicated in the Spanish plot, his arrest was ordered, and for the third time he took up his quarters in the Bastille. Worse than that, he must lay his handsome head on the block—for the regent has vowed he shall lose it.

*Mdlle. de Valois* is in despair; she is devotedly attached to him. *Mdlle. de Charolais* the same. But who shall write the list of ladies, noble if not royal,

beautiful if not noble, who with sighs and tears ask the life of this gay Lothario? Even the duchess entreats—the wife whose very existence he determined (and has kept his determination) systematically to ignore, from the day, when but a boy of fourteen, his father injudiciously married him to her. She was Mdlle. de Noailles, a young lady some few years his senior; very plain-faced and very sedate. She was to check the exuberant spirits of her wild young husband, who already gave promise of becoming the greatest libertine of the age. The bride was eighteen, *petite*, and in appearance younger than De Fronsac (his title at that time). He was tall for his age, well grown and handsome. He had probably forgotten his wife's existence when she visited him in the Bastille, eight years after their marriage. No other lady was allowed to see him; all applicants for that favor were sternly refused. She, however, came as a surprise upon him; her folly in displaying so much interest in his fate diverting him greatly.

It is doubtful whether the regent could, with impunity, have sent this great lord to the scaffold. More likely a *lettre-de-cachet* would have banished him to his estates. But fortune again smiled upon him. Mdlle. de Valois continued to weep and lament, and on her knees to implore her father to pardon and release her lover. The regent was annoyed at this importunity, and angrily desired her to desist. But another suitor soon appeared on the scene, the Duc de Modena, who had sent a special envoy to ask Mdlle. de Valois in marriage. Of this the regent took advantage. He was anxious to marry this daughter, and having missed the queenly diadem, he resolved that she should wear the ducal one. The duke having sent

his portrait—which, though probably flattered, was by no means attractive—the regent presented it to the lady. She refused to look at it, or to hear the word marriage mentioned. The regent calmly replied that the pardon and immediate release of Richelieu depended on her promise to accept the Duc de Modena.

She caught at the words, “to save her lover’s life she would gladly give her own. She would make even a greater sacrifice, she would marry the duke.” Instantly she gave her promise; exacted her father’s; turned her eyes on the frowning brow of the portrait, and swooned.

The regent, in this instance, faithfully kept his word; for Richelieu was walking about Paris the next evening. Some few days after, the ceremony of the marriage, by proxy, took place at the Palais Royal. The regent was anxious to conclude the arrangements, the bride being in a very desponding state of mind. The first feelings of enthusiasm having calmed down, her grief became excessive. The preparations for her marriage and departure for Italy filled her with terror, and she would take no part in them.

“On the day,” says a contemporary memoir, “that Mdlle. de Valois was united by proxy to the Duc de Modena, her appearance was that of a victim led to the sacrifice. Pale, trembling, and tearful, she excited the utmost sympathy; while, to add to her distress, prominently placed amongst the guests stood the Duc de Richelieu.” The regent had had the cruelty to invite him, and he the heartlessness to attend. Beside him was Mdlle. de Charolais, with whom, apparently unmoved, he occasionally laughed and conversed, both of them observing the bride with a critical eye.

False sentimentality had not yet come into fashion,

and real emotion was not easily excited amongst the gay company assembled to witness the bridal ceremony. But the story of the victim and her seducer, though hushed up, and all mention of it carefully suppressed, was well known to every one present. Richelieu's air of bravado inspired, therefore, general contempt. The Duchesse de Modena and Mdle. de Charolais later in life more thoroughly understood the character of the man who had deceived them both, and both learned to despise him. His *triste* celebrity, however, suffered not from such passing clouds, but rather increased than diminished.

Not long before this marriage took place, even Madame de Maintenon, writing from St. Cyr, and referring to Richelieu, calls him "my favorite." She says also, "I do not always dislike scapegraces;" but she adds, "provided they do not pass the bounds of vice and dishonor." Richelieu had certainly long before passed from the scapegrace state to that of vice and dishonor.

From some inexplicable motive, he aspired at this time to an academic arm-chair, and in the course of the next year, being not yet twenty-four, a vacancy occurring, he was elected to fill it, "never having written," says Duclos, "anything but a few love-letters." Through what powerful female influence he obtained that honor is not stated. It may have gratified his vanity to have a seat amongst the Forty, but it must have been singular to hear one of the professed guardians of the purity of the French language talk like an illiterate *badaud* or Parisian cockney. It was the fashion to do so at the reunions of the dissolute young men of the regency, and none had cultivated



this unenviable accomplishment more sedulously than the Duc de Richelieu.

*V'nez donc M'sieux; v'la quèques Louis. Faut met' ça dans sa poche; faut pas l' renfermer dans l' secrétaire,"* etc., is a specimen given of his usual manner of speaking. But this is probably a libel. Sentimental love-making could never have thus been carried on. It might have succeeded with the *grisettes*, and been assumed when masked, as well as have diverted both him and his wild companions to talk in that fashion at their nocturnal revels, nothing more. Yet it has been asserted that Richelieu had so thoroughly contracted this habit that he could never entirely divest himself of it—the *badaud* would peep out, and often when least desired.

## CHAPTER IX.

Une Négligée.—Louis XV.—The Financier's Wife.—A Fashionable Financier.—The Vicomte and Vicomtesse de F——. — John Law.—La Banque du Roi.—The Mississippi Company.—The Rue Quincampoix.—Cupidity and Despair.—Grand Hôtels and Opera Boxes.—The Courtiers Pay their Debts.—The "Regent" and the "Sancy."—The First Blow to the Système.—Deceived and Ruined.—Law Escapes to Flanders.—A Change from Paris to Brussels.—Order out of Disorder.

IN a splendidly furnished apartment in one of the hôtels of the Place Vendôme sit a lady and gentleman, taking their morning meal—a substantial repast, less of a French than a Scotch breakfast. The now fashionable coffee-pot is there, prominently in the centre of the table. The Parisians have been a long time making up their minds whether to accept or reject coffee. But merit has prevailed over prejudice. The Vicomte de Béchamel, the regent's *maître d'hôtel*, has already placed on his *menus* black coffee, in small cups, for Palais Royal dinners. The ladies have also discovered that it is excellent with milk, and are falling into the habit of sipping their cup of coffee in the morning. Madame de Sévigné, therefore, in her double prediction that both coffee and the plays of Racine were destined to pass out of favor after a very short reign, has proved a false prophetess.

But the lady and gentleman have finished their breakfast. The lady wears an elaborately embroidered *négligée* of Indian muslin, with ruffles of fine lace,

the finest that Valenciennes can produce. It is looped up with rose-colored ribands; the white silk petticoat has a broad border of rose color; the dress, a long flowing sash of the same; and the whole is displayed over a *panier* of ample size. She has a patch on the left cheek, another on her chin, and a third on the right temple—those little black patches, you know, that the Duchesse du Maine has just brought into vogue again. There is a *souffçon* of powder in her hair; her head-dress is of fine lace, with rose-colored silk lappets; her mittens are lace, and her high-heeled slippers rose-colored silk, embroidered in white and frilled with Valenciennes.

The lady is by no means the great lady one might suppose her to be, though she is accustomed to give herself very grand airs. Her elegant toilets, luxurious surroundings, her half-dozen châteaux, comtés, and marquisates, have all been so recently showered upon her, that she still is not perfectly at ease under them. To be borne with dignity, these things need "the aid of use," as Shakespeare says of "our new clothes, that cleave not to their mould without." Yet her *salon* is frequented by marchionesses and duchesses, and other great ladies. Even princesses have been known to waive etiquette and peep in for a moment. If she does not exactly look down on her high and mighty guests, she contrives to comport herself stiffly enough towards them. She has been made to feel, and still resents it, that the attraction lies not in her, but in the wizard powers of her husband; that if these great ladies visit *her* in the evening, it is because *he* would not grant them a five minutes' interview in his private bureau in the morning, and that there is just a chance of whispering a word in his ear in her *salon*. She is

to them but a solitary cipher, adding nothing whatever to the weight and influence of the substantial qualities attributed to him. Yet her superb diamonds, laces, and toilet generally often raise sighs of envy, and win her many gracious words and smiles.

The gentleman so courted and run after by the ladies, as far as being bewigged and beruffled, and wearing a sword at his side, looks like a grandee of the period. Had the time referred to been but a century nearer to us, one might, after scrutinizing his countenance, have guessed him to be an American cousin. His face is so "cute," shrewd, and clever; but less intellectual than cunning. There is now a shade of anxiety upon it, which is remarkable, as contrasting strangely with the air of audacity and perfect self-possession it usually wears. The lady, too, seems troubled and thoughtful, as she abstractedly opens and shuts and twirls her exquisite Watteau fan. One trembles for the safety of those pretty shepherdesses, so delicately painted on silk, with their lily complexions, their rosebud mouths, charming Swiss hats and costumes garlanded with flowers. But the reverie is ended by the entrance of a servant.

Is this man a servant? He enters with a very swaggering air. There is a trace of servitude—that is of livery—in his dress, for he wears a red waistcoat; though, for the rest, he has donned the garb of the *haute bourgeoisie*.

"Monsieur," he says, "I leave your service to-day. That arrangement I mentioned with the Vicomte de F—— is settled, signed, and sealed, and the price is paid in bank stock of your last issue. But that you may not be inconvenienced by the dearth of serving-men, I have brought here two who are willing to suc-

ceed to my place. They wait outside your good pleasure to see them."

"Can they drive well, Joseph?" inquires the master.

"They can both drive so well, monsieur, that whichever of the two you may reject, I shall take into my own service."

"And Annette?" says the lady inquiringly, referring to her waiting-maid, who is the coachman's wife.

"Annette, madame, also leaves you to-day. She is now engaging her maid; and should Joseph and Annette be wanted to-morrow, they must be inquired for at their hôtel, as the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de F——, for the title goes with the estates."

The lady shrugs her shoulders impatiently. The gentleman cannot forbear a smile. This transformation of his coachman into a vicomte is his own work, and the change in his own social position is scarcely less great. But his influence is on the wane, and a crash is at hand.

He is the famous Scotch banker, John Law, who, as Montesquieu says, "turned the State inside out;" who made France, as it were, one vast gambling-house; who demoralized society, by awakening feelings of cupidity, unknown to it before his chimerical system gave rise to that mania for reckless speculation.

"From the lowest of the people," says Voltaire, "even to magistrates, bishops, and princes, the cupidity he aroused in every rank diverted every mind from any attention to the public welfare, from all politic and ambitious views, filling them with fear of loss and desire of gain."

Law was a scheming, calculating man, who in these days would probably be called a "promoter;" but

that modern term for the successful getters-up of bubble projects was not then invented, and he was regarded as a clever financier. A fugitive from England for some misdemeanor, as soon as he had crossed the Channel he became a Roman Catholic, obtained letters of naturalization and permission to establish a bank. It was at first of very moderate pretensions. But a flattering prospectus invited depositors, and its notes got well into circulation. The State was then burdened with debt, and the regent was at his wits' end for money—both for his own private uses and for carrying on the government. It was in vain that he taxed his brain for new sources of income. It proved so unprofitable an article of taxation that it afforded him nothing but the barren suggestion of giving to specie a *threefold* nominal value. At this crisis Law presented his project for paying off the debt of the nation. It was submitted to the former Contrôleur-général, Nicholas Desmarets, nephew of the great Colbert, and favorably known for his zeal and intelligence in averting financial difficulties during the last years of the reign of Louis XIV. He entirely disapproved Law's scheme. Nevertheless, the regent accepted it. He liked its novelty. Better still, he liked the certainty, as explained to him more minutely by Law, of its drawing forth all the hoarded-up cash in the country, in exchange for stock of the "Banque du Roi," as Law's bank was henceforth to be called.

Without attempting to detail the mode of operation in this famous "Système Law,"—of which an explanation, more or less clear, is to be found in every history of France—it may be mentioned that there was established, in connection with the Royal Bank, a "Compagnie de Commerce d'Occident," which was

guaranteed to realize fabulous profits by trading in the Mississippi, colonizing Louisiana, and developing its rich mineral resources. Of the Mississippi few knew more than that it was reported to be a mine of wealth. This company was about as substantial as its bubble contemporary, the South Sea Company. But the fever of speculation excited by the desire to secure a share of the imaginary boundless riches that were promised to France, gave rise to scenes in the Rue Quincampoix, where the company had its offices, that exceeded in tumultuousness those of Change Alley and Threadneedle Street. Daily, from early dawn, crowds of eager men and women assembled in that long, narrow, grimy street, waiting for the opening of the bureau. As the hour drew on, the throng still increased, all struggling to get nearer the door. Pressing upon each other, some fainted, others fell, and, crushed or trampled upon, were carried away dead.

This Rue Quincampoix was the principal stock-jobbing rendezvous; and as the whole of the Parisian population had become stock-jobbers, it was a very animated part of the city. "There was no longer either business or society in Paris," says a French writer. "The workman, the tradesman, the magistrate, the man of letters, concerned themselves only with the rise and fall in stocks; the news of the day being their losses and gains. Nowhere was there any other subject of conversation, or any other gambling than gambling in stocks." Enormous fortunes were made so rapidly that a frenzy for acquiring wealth, difficult to describe, took possession of every one's mind. Many who began their speculations with a single government note of five hundred francs, by taking advantage of the constant fluctuation in the value of specie, bank-

stock, government notes, etc., in the space of a few weeks were the possessors of millions. "Servants who came to Paris at the beginning of the week behind the carriages of their masters, often, through some lucky venture, went home at the end of it in carriages of their own." Law's coachman was not a solitary instance of this kind, but one among many.

On the other hand, no less frequently, wealthy families were suddenly reduced to beggary. And suicides, assassinations, and the many crimes born of cupidity and despair, were of daily occurrence. The relative value of bank-stock, specie, and government notes often rose and fell several times in the course of the day. This was regulated solely by Law, attentive only to keep up the speculative fever he had created, and to draw in the cash while continuing to issue new paper. Of this the amount in circulation represented more than eighty times the value of all the specie in the kingdom.

At the same time, never had there been known such profusion and extravagance in dress, in furniture, in equipages, banquets, and fêtes as prevailed in Paris at this period. For it was not only the sumptuous entertainments given by the regent and the court circle—surpassing all that had been dreamed of in the good old days of Louis XIV.—that astonished the few persons who were staid and sedate, or that yet remained of the old school. It was the lavish style of living of those who had suddenly grown rich; often persons of the lowest class, yet who could find amongst the most splendid hôtels of the old nobility no dwelling sufficiently magnificent for them. In this way some fine specimens of sixteenth and seventeenth century architecture disappeared, to make way for new edifices,



often never begun. For before the ground was cleared, the wealthy *parvenu*, who had "dreamt of dwelling in marble halls," had been driven back, by a turn of Fortune's wheel, to his pallet in the cellar or garret; or if begun, the building was usually completed on a scale very inferior in grandeur and extent to that first proposed.

The theatres had their full share of this rich harvest of paper. Never, at the Italiens or the Théâtre Français, had there been witnessed a more splendid array of toilettes, or a more brilliant display of diamonds and other jewels than nightly might then have been seen there. There was as eager a competition for the possession of an opera box as for a share in the Mississippi Company, with this disadvantage to the manager—that he could not multiply his boxes, as Law did his shares, at pleasure. The renter of an opera box had his arms emblazoned on the door. The herald-painter, not too rich or too proud to work, had a flourishing time of it among the new nobility. For all of course assumed the *de*, and generally discovered they had a right to it; unknown survivors of noble families supposed to be extinct being found to be wondrously numerous.

So long as the Royal Bank commanded confidence, and its notes circulated freely, the reckless style of living, and the feverish pursuit of pleasure it had induced, went on unabated. Those who, at the flood-tide of fortune, had exchanged their bank paper for substantial possessions, of course remained rich. While those who had sold to obtain this much-coveted paper, looking for enormous dividends, when the gold-laden galleons should bring the treasures of Louisiana to France, sank into hopeless poverty; whose end was

often madness or crime. Rolls of the Royal bank-notes, as many as they needed, were supplied to the regent and the grandees of the court. With these they followed in extravagance the example of the *parvenus*, and also took the opportunity of paying their debts.

It was at this time that, advised by Saint-Simon, the famous diamond, known as the "Regent," was bought. The man in whose possession it was had been employed as overlooker in the Golconda mines. Contriving to secrete this fine stone and to leave his occupation unsuspected, he came to Europe and offered his diamond for sale, without success, at every European court. Arriving in France, he sought out Law, who took the diamond to the regent, and proposed to him to purchase it for the king. The price, three millions of francs in hard cash, induced him to decline. But at the suggestion of Saint-Simon, Law was authorized to endeavor to make some arrangement with the owner for a lower sum. Two millions was the price for which he at last consented to part with it. But as immediate payment was not convenient, a certain delay was conceded, and the interest for that time on the sum agreed upon was at once handed to him; while, as security for the payment of the two millions, crown jewels to the value of eight millions were deposited in his hands.\*

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\* The "Regent" is considered a much finer stone than the Sancy, which was bought from a Swiss for an *écu*, or three francs, by the Duke of Burgundy, some time during the fifteenth century. After passing through several hands it came into the possession of Harlay-de-Sancy as security for 40,000 francs lent to Dom Antonio of Portugal, who afterwards sold it to Sancy for a further advance of 60,000 francs. Sancy disposed of it to James, of England, through whom it came into the possession of Louis XIV.

The great embezzlement scheme had, up to this time, satisfied those who profited by it. The regent heaped honors, titles, and estates upon Law; made him Councillor of State and Comptroller-general of the finances; though, while enriching others, he had not forgotten his own private interests. But the first blow to the "système" was about to be struck. Just, too, when Monsieur and Madame de Law, finding the hôtel in the Place Vendôme an unsuitable residence, were in treaty for that more commodious one, the splendid Hôtel Soissons. The offices of the Royal Bank were established on the ground-floor of the Hôtel Vendôme. There, speculating ladies intruded on Law at all hours—seeking advice as to the expediency of buying or selling in the course of the day—and sometimes, Mmes. de Parabère and de Tencin, for instance, taking away a bundle of notes with them; notes that might have been issued from any printing house, as no precautions whatever were taken against forgery.

The scarcity of specie—all pensions and salaries being also paid in paper—began to be felt as an extreme inconvenience. It even raised suspicions in some minds. A considerable quantity of paper was in consequence presented at the bank, and cash requested. The next day appeared an edict prohibiting the conversion of the notes into specie, also forbidding all persons to retain possession of more than five hundred francs in cash. This created a panic. The Parliament remonstrated, and refused to register the edict. Law complained to the regent, and the Parliament was banished to Pontoise. New paper was issued, but could not be put into circulation. For the eyes of most persons began to open to the fact

that they had been deceived and ruined. Numberless were the expedients resorted to by Law to restore the credit of the now decried paper; but none of them availed.

The people thronged the Place Vendôme, and threatened to attack the bank. Law took refuge in the Palais Royal. "Where," says Voltaire, "I had formerly seen him enter the saloon, followed by dukes and peers of the realm; by Marshals of France and high dignitaries of the Church." Now, humiliated and crestfallen, he seeks the protection of the regent, at whose hands the people without are demanding the man who has brought ruin on the nation. The turbulence of passion is at its height. But the regent, who is more guilty than Law, favors his escape to Flanders. The Duc de Bourbon-Condé lends him his post-chaise for a part of his journey—he could hardly do less for the man who had enriched him by so many millions. For, with the exception of a few obscure persons who made and retained a fortune, it was the regent and the court who were the gainers. The great wealth of several princely and noble houses dates from that time.

In being thus, suddenly and wholly unprepared, compelled to quit Paris, Law was unable to realize his colossal fortune, which consisted chiefly in extensive landed estates. Two thousand louis, and a few of his wife's jewels, were said to be all he took from France with him. He passed over to England, where, it was asserted, but with little foundation, that he had large sums of money invested. From London he went to Venice, schemed and speculated, but without success, and died there in 1729, in circumstances that did not denote the possession of much wealth. "His

widow," writes Voltaire, "I saw while I was in Brussels. She was as humble there as she had been haughty and triumphant in Paris." Such was the *dénouement* of what the French, with their accustomed levity, were pleased to call "La Comédie de Law."

The State was more in debt than before. "Some swindlers," writes Duclos, "of the upper and lower classes had grown rich. The *bourgeoisie* was ruined: every one was dissatisfied with his position, and commercial morality was at an end." To add to the general distress, inundations and extensive fires ravaged several of the French provinces, and Marseilles was nearly depopulated by the excessive virulence of the plague.

It was absolutely necessary to devise without delay some means for alleviating the wide-spread misery brought on the country by the exploded "Système Law." This difficult financial operation was undertaken by the Brothers Pâris, bankers, who had been opponents of Law's system from its outset. By their great financial ability and untiring zeal, they at length succeeded in evoking some sort of order out of disorder; and in effecting an arrangement which, if it failed to meet all ills resulting from the *Système*, secured at least the eventual payment of the debts of the State.

## CHAPTER X.

Death of Madame de Maintenon.—The Czar's Visit to St. Cyr.—A Complimentary Salutation.—The Czar Peter in Paris.—Thirst for Useful Knowledge.—Special "Interviewing."—The Invitation to the Ball.—Effect of Peter's Visit to Paris.—Madame de Caylus.—Palais Royal Banquets.—Béchemel, Marin, Soubise.—Supper after the Opera.—Fashions of the Period.—The Ladies' Toilettes.—Les Belles Dames at Supper.—An Example to the Czar.

WHILE the events just referred to were occurring in France, there died at St. Cyr, in 1719, the widow of the poor ribald poet, Scarron, and of the great Louis XIV. Madame de Maintenon, then in her eighty-fourth year, passed away calmly and with little bodily suffering. Sight and hearing remained with her to the last, and her mental faculties were wholly unimpaired. To within a few days of her death, she regularly corresponded with her nieces, and with many old friends of the old court; and her letters are not only remarkably chatty and cheerful, but often very witty.

The supersedure of the will of the late king, and more especially the malignant hate with which the Duc du Maine was pursued by the regent and the Duc de Bourbon, affected her deeply. Otherwise she might have continued to live on for some years; though she confessed to finding her seclusion a weariness. It would have gratified her, she wrote, could she consistently have done so, to have enjoyed more of the

society of those who understood better than the good sisters who presided at St. Cyr the feelings and ideas of one who had passed so much of her life in the great world. But as time went on she resigned herself to that. Her death-blow, no doubt, was the arrest and imprisonment of the Duc du Maine. She was so devotedly attached to him, that anxiety for his safety made her augur the worst. "His goodness and piety, and his having been the favorite son of a great king, were his only crimes," she said; "crimes which his enemies could not forgive him." She did not live to hear of his release, and his acquittal of all complicity in his wife's political intrigues.

The Czar Peter the Great visited Paris shortly before Madame de Maintenon's death. He had a desire to see the woman who, in the decline of life, had captivated the *Grand Monarque*, and whose secret counsels so largely influenced the affairs of Europe for full thirty years. Madame de Maintenon consented to receive him. An ante-room and two *salons*, draped with black, as was customary for royal mourning, led to her chamber, the hangings and furniture of which were of crimson silk damask. She was reclining on her couch, supported by pillows. Two ladies of the establishment were seated near her. Her dress was a Hongréline, or long jacket of gray velvet, and a flat, plaited lace cap, under a black silk *coiffe*. Over her was spread an ermine coverlet; which may have been intended to indicate royalty, like the ermine mantle thrown over her when her portrait was painted by order of Louis XIV.

Describing the interview herself, she says she received the Czar, after the Maréchal de Villeroi, who introduced him, had left the room, without any further

ceremony than that of taking off her black silk mittens; this being the etiquette of the period, when in the presence of a person of superior rank.

The Czar, on entering, paid her a similar compliment, in the Russian mode of salutation. He closed his eyes, and, with his arms hanging straight by his side, slowly bent his body until the tips of his fingers touched the floor; then, as slowly, resumed his upright position. He seated himself in the large arm-chair of crimson and gold brocade, arranged for him by the side of the aged invalid's couch, and silently gazed on her so earnestly, that, as she tells Madame de Caylus, she could scarcely forbear a smile. But as in that position he obtained only a side view of her, he wheeled round the massive arm-chair with a noise that was perfectly startling, and looked her straight in the face.

He could, had he chosen, have made himself well understood in French. But it was his good pleasure to use the Russian tongue; his ambassador, who accompanied him, serving as interpreter. He was, however, so ill-qualified for the office, that Madame de Maintenon understood little more than that all the Czar had seen at St. Cyr pleased him well, and that he proposed to found at St. Petersburg a similar establishment. She replied by a flattering eulogy of the late king; to which the Czar listened with profound attention. He then took leave with the same formal salaam; she half raising herself on her couch to acknowledge it.

The habits and tastes of the great Peter were but little in accordance with those of the upper classes in France. He was very differently impressed, from what was expected, by the *fêtes* prepared for his entertain-



ment. But what he sought out for his own amusement, as well as instruction, and which scarcely any one thought of showing him, interested him greatly. He particularly admired the mausoleum of the great cardinal, in the Sorbonne. But it was rather admiration of the stern inflexible will of the man whose ashes reposed beneath it than of the skill of the artist in the execution of the monument. The splendors of the Hôtel Lesdiguières were scarcely of a kind to be appreciated by him; though on his return to his own capital he instituted changes in his palace and in the toilet of his beautiful Catherine, which led to the taste for luxury and magnificence, at first rather barbaric, that developed itself at the Russian court so speedily after his death.

The Marquis de Tessé played the host at the Hôtel Lesdiguières. The Marquis de Nesle and Duc de Villeroi were appointed to meet the Czar on the frontier with a suitable escort. The number of elaborately embroidered coats, and uniforms covered with gold and silver lace, they thought it necessary to take with them to do honor to the Russian despot, excited his ridicule, as by degrees they displayed their ample wardrobe. Each morning, each evening, a new costume, while the Czar keeps to his one plain suit of heavy blue cloth, and laughingly inquires why these French gentlemen employ so bad a tailor, as apparently he cannot supply a coat that pleases well enough to be worn a second time. Yet the example of those about him so far influenced the great Peter in the matter of personal adornment, that he provided himself with a handsomely embroidered blue satin coat. Probably he first appeared in it at some Parisian *fête*. History has, however, overlooked that fact, if fact it

be, or has not thought it worthy of being handed down to posterity.

The bump of inquisitiveness, so characteristic, in its largeness of development, of the Anglo-Saxon race of the nineteenth century, could scarcely have had a place at all in the cranium of the folk of the early part of the eighteenth. Had the same thirst for useful knowledge existed then as now, there doubtless would have been the same laudable endeavor to slake it. The most persevering and keen-eyed on the staff of "our own" would have been specially commissioned "to interview," *volens, volens*, the great Russian bear. Prying eyes would have found out for us, together with a hundred other interesting minutiaë, whether Peter took a bath and put on a fine linen chemise before donning his blue satin coat, or whether the rough monster had so little sense of harmony and beauty and the fitness of things as, with unwashed hands, to slip it on over a "false front," hiding a red or blue Jersey shirt. Compared with the seventeenth century, French memoir writers are few in the eighteenth. How invaluable, then, would the gatherings and scrapings of a special interviewer have proved at this date; one restrained by no feelings of false delicacy from turning his subject inside out, and doing his duty to his public, by telling us all things. It is comforting to know that the unborn generation will have scant reason to reproach the present one for any reticence of that sort.

But to return for a moment to the blue satin coat. We know that it was worn on that grand and memorable occasion, which may be termed the virtual emancipation of woman in Russia. The issuing of the Ukase, commanding the nobles and court officials, and all who held any appointment, civil or military, to come to a

ball at his palace, and to bring with them their wives and daughters—poor oppressed women, who, hitherto, had lived in seclusion under the iron rule of their masters—was a very happy stroke of despotism. Many among the great army of saints enrolled in the Holy Calendar, have been canonized for far less deserving deeds. To those who did not readily obey the command of the Czar—and some few did venture to evince a reluctance to let loose their womankind—Peter despatched a second command, accompanied by a menace of the knout. This had, of course, its due effect. Above all, the company was bidden to come sober, and if they wore swords to leave them at home, as all would be required to dance. To set a good example, Peter and Catherine, very praiseworthily, made a point of taking but half their usual quantity of brandy and tokay that day. Good manners and urbanity therefore prevailed; and this first Russian attempt at a court reunion passed off remarkably well.

Though Peter's object in visiting foreign countries was chiefly, as we all know, to obtain further insight into whatever was likely to increase the material prosperity of his own, it seems evident that he was not an unobservant spectator of French society, or of woman's influence in it. His visit to Paris led to many social changes in Russia. It was probably the cause of his placing Catherine in a more prominent and influential position than before. It is remarkable what deference this man, so rough in outward demeanor, so innately cruel, paid to the lowly-born woman he made his wife, elevated to a throne and crowned with so much pomp and ceremony. Peter certainly took a lesson in gallantry while in France, and profited by it.

He interested himself in many things that were at-

tractive to him from their novelty, which often consisted only in a refinement he was wholly unused to. He was obliged to observe some degree of moderation in his habit of excessive drinking, and was probably all the better for it. The little king pleased and amused him, though he was growing up a silent, self-willed child; petted and spoiled by his elderly guardians, the Maréchal de Villeroi and the Bishop of Fréjus.

But among ladies who chiefly attracted the Czar, Madame de Caylus obtained his highest admiration. He had heard of the beauty of Madame de Maintenon's charming niece, and had been very desirous of seeing her. At this time she was no longer young. She had passed the terrible fortieth year, and had lived in seclusion for some years; but during the regency she reappeared in Parisian society—according to Saint-Simon—full of vivacity, and as beautiful and charmingly seductive as ever. She bore away the palm from younger beauties—the frail but lovely Madame de Parabère, and the fair Haidée (Mdlle. Aïssé), whose history is so like a romance.

Louis XIV. disliked Madame de Caylus. She was too sparkling, too *spirituelle* to please him. He was shocked at any unexpected sally of wit, as at “an indecency,” and the youthful Marquise (she was married at thirteen) frequently sinned in that way. More than all she inclined towards Jansenism. Even her aunt could not overlook that; she was, therefore, when about nineteen, banished from the court circle, and remained fourteen years in disgrace. During that time she turned very seriously to devotion; fasted and prayed, and became gloomy, under the spiritual direction of a Jansenist priest. By and by she grew

weariness of so joyless a life; abjured Jansenism, and took a Jesuit father for her confessor. This restored her to the favor of Madame de Maintenon, who then pleaded for her erring niece with the king. The *Grand Monarque*, pleased with her repentance, not only vouchsafed his pardon, but also granted an increase of four thousand francs to her pension of six thousand.

Madame de Caylus had recently become a widow—a circumstance supposed to have influenced the change in her religious or theological opinions. But whether or not, the prevailing license seems to have had some effect on her, for Saint-Simon, her great admirer, says that both Jansenists and Jesuits were objects of her pleasantries. “The regency approached,” he says, “and she struck the key-note.” Yet during that brilliant period when Law’s bank-notes were so plentiful, and the Palais Royal entertainments so magnificent, she seems to have been doubtful as to the propriety of joining them. Madame de Maintenon was appealed to. She, of course, did not approve the regent’s dissolute mode of life; but with reference to these public banquets, she replies: “You must go to them, it will not do to condemn those in authority.”

Thus sanctioned, Madame de Caylus could, without scruple, take her seat with other ladies at these entertainments, to which the nobility and the *beau monde* generally were invited. She even sometimes presided, “like a rather lively grace; like one of Homer’s goddesses; charming all hearts, and making them forget everything, even love.” The regent certainly set the fashion in France of good cookery and extravagant living. The *menus* of the celebrated Vicomte have been pronounced by connoisseurs in gastronomy *chefs-d’œuvre* of their kind; while sauce à la *Béchamel*,

and champagne *à la glace* are still as much in favor as when, a century and a half ago, that sublime genius invented them. The Prince de Soubise and his distinguished *chef*, Marin, who flourished rather later in the century, originated some very costly dishes; but none of their creations have obtained such general acceptance, and so long retained undiminished popularity, as those of the famous Vicomte de Béchamel.

It was the fashion at that time at certain *hôtels* of the noblesse to prepare a supper, on opera nights, for ten or twelve friends, who were invited during the performance to return home with the host or hostess. Care was taken to have an equal number of ladies and gentlemen. Returning from the opera or theatre was a miserable affair in those times. The feeble gleam from the lanterns, or the lurid glare of torches, both carried by men—for, as yet, there were no lamps—gave but a very flickering, uncertain light, often treacherously leading both horses and men into quagmires of accumulated mud, threatening to life and limb. To enter the hall of some splendid *hôtel* after traversing the gloomy streets, was like passing from Cimmerian darkness into the bright precincts of fairyland.

Girandoles of chased silver or Venetian glass, filled with wax-lights, are ranged on the walls. Splendid candelabra on the table, which is covered with finest white linen from Holland, sparkling crystal glass, and Japanese porcelain, or a magnificent table service in silver; vases and *épergnes*, filled with flowers and fruits, giving color and beauty to the table arrangements. The champagne is ready, and the more substantial part of the supper only waits the presence of the guests.

And the guests themselves form a brilliant show,

quite worth bestowing a glance upon. The gentlemen wear fewer superfluous puffings of satin and velvet than in the Louis XIV. time. They have also greatly diminished the height, length, and breadth of their wigs. Some have altogether dispensed with flowing curls at the back, and have adopted powder and the bag-wig. The late king was persuaded to try it, but can hardly be said to have adopted it, and in the size of his peruke he would not abate an inch. Embroidered silk or velvet coats are still the fashion; but they sit closer to the figure. The voluminous trunk-hose are entirely abandoned, except on state days, for a tighter-fitting garment, with a long embroidered vest. There is an ample display of fine lace in frills and ruffles. Diamonds glitter in buttons, on sword-hilts, and in feather-bordered hats; and the red-heeled shoes, cut in a high flap above the instep, are fastened by elaborately chased gold or diamond buckles.

The elderly ladies of this period did not follow the changing modes of the younger ones. They continued to wear the plainer and more suitable style of dress introduced by Madame de Maintenon.

Like the gentlemen, the young ladies have cut down their head-dresses to a moderate height. All wear powder. It is thought to be advantageous to the complexion, and to impart lustre to the eyes and brilliancy to the eyelashes. Pearls and diamonds and lace are intertwined with the hair. The *blondes* are lavish in the use of patches; but it is lamentable to note that snuff-taking is becoming far too general a habit, many pretty noses showing traces of it. There is, you perceive, no diminution in the spread of the *panier*, and the skirt, long and training at the back, is caught up at the side with bows of riband with long

floating ends. The shoes are really artistic productions, and extravagant as they are in price, it is yet impossible to speak of such marvels of workmanship as dear. The *cordonnier* of that day (to translate him into a shoemaker is to drag him, as it were, from his pedestal) was truly an artist.

How gracefully, too, the ruffles of fine *point d'Alençon* wave to and fro, as the ladies flutter their fans. "This is a Lancret," remarks one of the fair dames as she opens her fan for inspection. "Watteau, you know, has grown ambitious since the Academy has received his pictures."

"Yes, he has forsaken his shepherdesses, and has sent a really fine picture to the *salon* this season—'Infantry on the March.' But he is ill, and I fear will paint but few more."

"Have you seen the *Le Couvreur* in *Mariamne*?" asks another who has just dropped in after the *Théâtre Français*. "No? You must then. She is splendid in mourning. Made quite an impression. Voltaire does well to pay homage in that quarter. I am told he is constantly on his knees before her. He knows that it is *Adrienne* more than *Mariamne* that raises such a *fureur*."

Seated round the splendidly appointed table this grand company is really a charming sight. There is more talking than eating, with the ladies, at least; yet the foaming *vin d'AI* seems to meet with their full approval. It is to be feared that it is even growing too much in favor with these fine ladies of the regency.

Is it not likely that the great Peter, though fond of going to bed at seven or eight in the evening, may once or twice have been present at a *petit-souper* after the Opera? He was fond of music, and the *ballet*



pleased him greatly, though he cared little for the performances of the Théâtre Français.

It may be suspected that it was so; and that the savage breast of the Russian bear was subdued by the fascinations of the ladies at some brilliant reunion of this sort; that he then and there inwardly resolved to give the Muscovite Court an empress, and to raise woman in his wide empire to as lofty a pinnacle as that upon which she was elevated in France.

## CHAPTER XI.

The Turkish Ambassador.—The Turk's Blessing.—The King's Unwonted Docility.—The Young King's Amusements.—The King's Pastors and Masters.—The King and his Confessor.—Massillon's Petit Carême.—The Preaching of Massillon.—Massillon in Society.—Villeroi's Devotion to his King.—A Youthful Gambler.—Projected Marriages.—The Bulle Unigenitus.—A Very Vicious Bull.—Taken by the Horns—The Marriages Arranged.

“WHAT does your Excellency think of the beauty of my king? Is not he charming, amiable, graceful—a perfect picture?”

“Allah be praised, and preserve this fair child from all that is evil and ill-omened !”

The questioner is the old Maréchal, Duc de Villeroi, the young king's governor, and now in his seventy-ninth year. He who replies is Mehemet Effendi, Ambassador Extraordinary from the Sultan, Achmet III. The Turk had expressed a wish to see the youthful Louis XV., and a day had, accordingly, been appointed to receive him at Vincennes. Mehemet was shrewd and observant. He wrote an account of his embassy, and criticised, with much acuteness, those members of the regent's government with whom the object of his mission brought him in contact. He speaks with contempt and disdain of the infamous Dubois, then minister for foreign affairs as well as Archbishop of Cambrai. “He did me the honor,” writes Mehemet, “to receive me on a carpet of cloth

of gold, but could not make up his mind to favor me with one word of truth."

Of his interview with the youthful sovereign and his governor, he says, "After being introduced by the *maréchal*, we entered into a pleasant and friendly conversation on various topics, the little king greatly admiring the Turkish dress, and examining my poignard very minutely, as well as that of my secretary, and the interpreter's who accompanied me."

Villeroi, after Mehemet's reply to his question respecting the child-king's beauty, proceeded to inform him that his king was but eleven years and four months old, and that his figure, as he perceived, was already well developed and finely proportioned.

"Look well at his hair," he said; "it is all his own—no wig."

"And as the *maréchal* spoke, he turned the child round," remarks Mehemet, "that I might better observe his hyacinthine locks. I passed my fingers caressingly through them: they were like threads of gold; even in length, and falling in curls over his back and shoulders."

"'He can walk well, too,' said his governor. 'Now let us see you walk in your very best manner.' And the little king, with the majestic gait of the partridge, walked to the centre of the *salon* and back again.

"'Now, with greater speed,' he added, 'that his Excellency may see how swiftly you can run.' Immediately the king began to bound with the fleetness of a young roe up and down the apartment. The *maréchal* then asked me if I did not think he was an amiable child.

"I answered," says Mehemet, "fervently, as the child stood beside me, with his hand clasped in mine,

‘May the All-powerful Allah, who created this beautiful being, bless and preserve him!’”

The ambassador appears to have witnessed this little farce with the most perfect gravity; and his youthful majesty to have been more docile than usual. All accounts represent him as shy with strangers, and apathetic and obstinate in the extreme.

The Turks and their rich Oriental dresses were, however, a novelty to him, which may account for his unwonted docility, and the readiness with which he obeyed his doting old governor, and allowed him to put him through his paces in so undignified a manner.

Owing to the king’s delicate health in these early years, he had been permitted to run almost wild, with the view of strengthening his constitution by much open-air exercise and amusement. It was then scarcely expected that he would live to attain his majority—his thirteenth year. But it was his governor’s opinion that his life was more in danger from poison than from bodily weakness. Vigilant, therefore, was the watch he kept over those who prepared the child’s meals; while his shirts, gloves, handkerchiefs, and bed-linen were under the charge of the anxious *maréchal* himself.

Hitherto the king had received but little instruction. His preceptor, Fleury, Bishop of Fréjus, thought more of gaining his pupil’s affection by excessive indulgence, than of cultivating his mind and training him in habits of industry. At La Muette—bought for him after the death of the Duchesse de Berri—there was a small plot of ground, named by Villeroi “His Majesty’s garden,” which was dug and planted wholly by himself. He had also a cow, which he milked and tended. But, more objectionable still, he

was allowed to mess about with saucepans and kettles, and prepare his own broth and coffee. Like Louis XIII. he was fond of falcons, and was amused to see them pick to pieces the poor little live sparrows that were given them for food.

Not that he was absolutely cruel. But he was of a sluggish, apathetic temperament; bored to death, even at this early age. The earnest viciousness of these birds of prey was a spectacle that roused him from his dreamy discontent; captivated his attention; therefore amused him. His natural insensibility preserved him from feelings of pain or pity at witnessing the struggles and sufferings of the poor little birds. Such feelings were reserved for himself when any mischance occurred to him. And the boy proved father to the man.

It was a misfortune for Louis XV., as Madame de Maintenon observed, "that he should not have learned obedience as a subject before commanding as a king." But the system of education pursued by the governess, governor, and preceptor appointed by Louis XIV., consisted in gratifying his every whim; encouraging every puerile fancy, without any attempt to inculcate moral principles or noble and generous sentiments. True, he was taught to say his prayers regularly, and to attend mass daily: but the first was a mere exercise of the memory, and almost the only one imposed on it; the second, simply a matter of habit and routine. One can imagine that he had heard less of the goodness of God than of the power of the evil one; for, like the two preceding Louis, he stood immensely in fear of his satanic majesty.

When he was seven and a half years old the Duchesse de Ventadour gave up her charge entirely into

the hands of the Duc de Villeroi. The regent then appointed the Abbé Fleury confessor to the king. Though of the same name, the abbé was not related to the Bishop of Fréjus. He had been *sous précepteur* to the Duc de Bourgogne, the king's father, was now near eighty years of age, and for many years had been wholly devoted to literature. His "History of the Church" was long considered the best work that had been written on that subject, and its style, though unpretending, natural and forcible. According to Voltaire, the "Preliminary Discourses" were superior to the history, being "almost worthy of a philosopher." The regent said, "he selected him to take charge of the king's conscience because he was neither Jansenist, Molinist, nor Ultramontain."

He, however, lived in the palace secluded in his own apartment, his duties as confessor being too slightly onerous to interrupt his literary pursuits. It was customary for the little king, with his own royal hand, to scrawl out for himself a confession of the peccadilloes of which he considered he had been guilty. This was submitted, first, to the bishop, who, having revised it, sent it to the abbé. After looking over it, some words of exhortation were addressed to the youthful penitent, and absolution was given; it being an understood arrangement that no questions should ever be put to him.

At about this time the celebrated preacher Massillon was delivering those eloquent discourses known as the "Petit carême." The young king was supposed to learn from them both his duty towards his people and what his own private conduct should be. The popularity of these discourses was immense. They had a vogue which sermons, as sermons, can scarcely

again hope to attain. "First, because" (says that able writer, M. Bungener) "they lack almost entirely the Christian flavor, and are sermons as little as it is possible to be. Throughout them there breathes a spirit of morality, pure and pleasing, but of morality only; of faith there is none. Secondly, philosophy abounds in them, and, as far as it goes, it is good and wise philosophy; but it is weak, and may with too much facility be made to adapt itself to the ideas, the interests, the passions of the period."

Voltaire is said to have invariably had the "*Petit carême*" lying beside him when writing. He speaks of its author as "the preacher who best knows the world. A moderate and tolerant philosopher." The philosophers of the new school, with Voltaire at their head, vaunted Fénelon and Massillon as being sharers in their opinions and views. The first for attacking authority, by attacking in *Telemachus* the vices of Louis XIV.; the second for teaching in the "*Petit carême*," and in the name of God, that authority emanates from the people.

Like his famous predecessor Bourdaloue, Massillon did not excel in funeral orations. His great gift of eloquence seemed to fail him when lauding the imaginary virtues of the dead. One sentence only became celebrated, "God alone is great, my brethren." They are the opening words of the funeral oration of Louis XIV., and were no doubt effective; those to whom they were addressed having accustomed themselves to believe that the king alone is great. For as Massillon, in the course of his oration, remarked, "His subjects almost raised altars to him."

During the last twenty years of his life, in the retirement of his diocese of Clermont, Massillon occu-

ped himself in revising his sermons; in improving and polishing their style; and, it is said, bringing them more into harmony with the philosophical ideas then prevalent. But whether or not, as they remain to us, they are models of eloquence. Those on true and false glory contain lessons that Louis XIV. no less than his successor might well indeed have laid to heart. Another on *ennui* and its remedy, had its counsels been followed, might have spared Louis XV. many an idle hour of melancholy, and weariness of existence.

If, as is sometimes asserted, all that these sermons contain of Christian doctrine is in the text, the rest being mere moral teaching; it must yet be confessed that it is moral teaching of a very high order, and that the world would be none the worse if this mere morality, so ably taught, were more generally put into practice. Massillon was greatly sought after in society. Like so many of the academic forty, he was a frequenter of the *salon* of Madame de Lambert. His reputation was great as a man of genius; and, though inclining to the new school of thought, in urbanity and politeness of manner, he was a follower of the old court. He would never be drawn into a theological argument. De Richelieu on one occasion having put some malapropos question of the sort to him, he replied, "I am not in the habit of talking theology except in the pulpit, or in the confessional. You can come there."

Massillon once preached in the Royal Chapel, in the presence of the young king, his governor, and the court, on the text, "Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles." A text which, be it remarked, has little or no philosophy or Christian doctrine in it. However, the Duc de Villeroi, who



was not only devoted to his king, but also one of the most obsequious courtiers of the old school, was much affected by the text. Whenever the preacher, in the course of his sermon, repeated it, the old duke wept; his emotion increasing as the discourse proceeded.

At last, after gazing on his king with a sort of rapturous expression, as on some beautiful vision, while the words happy, etc., were pronounced, he, when they were concluded, pressed his aged hands on his eyes, bowed his head and sobbed. His king, meanwhile, greatly in the sulks at the length of the sermon, and unable also to comprehend the cause of his governor's emotion, looked first at him, then at the preacher, with that air of proud defiance he had from his childhood, and frowned and pouted his disgust with both. Woe to thee, O land, etc., might then have been presaged.

Yet one must feel pity for this orphan child—so lonely, silent, and melancholy. It is not surprising that he should have been reserved and shy, accustomed as he was from infancy to be hedged about with the same stiff etiquette as had prevailed in the old king's court. Doomed, too, to the companionship and care of those aged persons, with whom he could feel no sympathy, and who had no tie of relationship on him, to call it forth. He was fond of Fleury, who was amiable and gentle, and whose character inspired affection, far more than that of the fussy old Duc de Villeroi, though Villeroi's vigilance was believed—and by Fleury himself—to have thwarted the designs that at one time existed against the king's life.

He seems to have associated scarcely at all with the youthful nobility; who as court pages, or attendants of the Dauphin, were usually brought up with

royal children. The effeminate Duc de Gêvres, and Marquis de Sauvré were of the number. They were something older than the king, but their influence on him was an evil one, as was also that of the Duc de Richelieu, some few years later. Young Louis, however, was already a gambler, and expert at most games of hazard. No check apparently was, in this respect, placed on him, as he frequently staked considerable sums. He was also remarkably eager to win money, and very carefully hoarded his gains.

But a circumstance occurred at this time, which temporarily occasioned the young monarch much pain and annoyance. There had been a short war with Spain after the discovery and breaking up of the Duchesse du Maine's Spanish plot. The quarrel being settled, the regent became desirous of marrying one of his daughters to the Spanish prince—Don Louis, Prince of the Asturias. To induce the king of Spain to lend a favorable ear to his proposal, the regent also suggested a marriage between the youthful Infanta and Louis XV., not yet twelve years old. Philip gave his consent on certain conditions, of a religious, or rather theological character.

Although "very French," and always yearning for his country—his possession of the Spanish crown never reconciling him to exile—Philip V. had, nevertheless, become a perfect Spaniard in bigotry. He was a furiously zealous supporter of the presumptuous pretensions of the Church of Rome to rule the conscience of mankind; and he could imagine no more pleasing spectacle to present to the foreign visitors at his court, who were of the fold of the faithful, than a brilliant *auto-da-fé*, for which there was always a supply of poor heretics kept on hand.

This he thought infinitely better than the ordinary bull-fights. They are apt to inspire disgust, as well as feelings of pity for the sufferings of the animals engaged in them, when there is wanting in the spectator the Spanish enthusiasm that overrules all other feeling. But the burning of heretics had a soothing effect on the agitated mind of Philip. And in those good old times it was to many devout Catholics as the offering up to heaven of a sweet-smelling sacrifice, with the certainty, too, that it was looked upon there with favor.

Philip's conditions, then, were—First, that the *Bulle Unigenitus*, which had for many years been the fertile source of dissension in the Gallican Church, should be unanimously accepted by the French clergy, and registered by the Parliament. Secondly, that the conscience of the young king should be confided to the direction of a Jesuit confessor—the good old easy-going Abbé Fleury being required to resign.

This second condition was easily complied with. The old abbé was too far advanced on the journey of life to be troubled with worldly ambition. He gathered up his papers and parchments, and went his way contentedly enough.

But the *Bulle*?\* Now, this *Bulle Unigenitus* had

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\* The *Bulle Unigenitus*, as most persons know, was issued by Pope Clement XI. in 1713. Its object was to condemn a small work, entitled "Reflexions Morales sur l'Evangile," published so long before as 1671. It was written by le Père Quesnel, of the Oratoire. The work had had great success, had passed through several editions, and even had met with the approval of the great Bossuet. It was popular also with the Jansenists. This being the case, the Jesuits began to suspect, a new edition being called for after the death of Bossuet, that the work must contain some heret-

occasioned Louis XIV. infinite worry of mind during the last years of his life, and the clergy of France, high and low, had been kept in a continual ferment respecting it. Many had been the heart-burnings felt by bishops and archbishops, and doctors of the Sorbonne, as on the one side it was decreed to accept it, on the other to firmly oppose it. In short, the proverbial bull in a china shop, however viciously determined on overthrowing and demolishing all the crockery that came in his way, could not have committed more havoc and devastation than did this Papal Bull, in the destruction of harmony and good feeling amongst the clerical party and Catholics, good and bad generally, who composed the Gallican church.

However, what Louis XIV., with all his despotic authority, could not accomplish; what the cardinal archbishop of Paris had refused the king on his death-bed—when he sent to request him to accept the Bull, and with the request made an offer of reconciliation—Dubois, influenced solely by ambitious views, undertook to effect. And he succeeded.

The cardinal, for the sake of giving peace to the Church, and putting an end to the irritating theologi-

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ical doctrines. Disputes arose on the subject, which led to a revival of the Jansenist quarrels. Louis XIV. then requested the sovereign pontiff, Clement XI., to give his opinion of the work. After three years' consideration, the result was the famous *Bulle Unigenitus*, condemning 101 of Quesnel's propositions. Among them was the following: "One should not be deterred from doing one's duty by the fear of being unjustly excommunicated." Of course no Pope could tolerate teaching so heretical as that. Le Père Quesnel died, very poor and in exile, at near ninety years of age, about the time of Philip's demand that the Bull should be accepted in France, if his daughter was to be the queen of Louis XV.

cal quarrels which this abominable Bull had given rise to throughout France, consented to accept it. Yet he did not yield it a hearty consent, but merely allowed conviction to be forced on him sorely against his will. Other recalcitrant prelates, however, thought it right to follow the cardinal archbishop's example. If in the end it proved that the Bull had only been "scotched," not killed, present purposes yet were served, and, above all, the worthy Dubois received his expected reward from Pope Innocent III.

The archbishopric of Rheims was offered at this time to Fleury, with the intention of superseding him as preceptor; his growing influence with the king displeasing Dubois. But Fleury, who had resigned the bishopric of Fréjus for that appointment, now declined to give it up for the archbishopric. Titles, honors, and large revenues were no temptations to him. He loved power, no doubt; and as he was one of those who believe that to wait and watch for the object desired is often the surest way of obtaining it, the power he coveted, in due time, fell into his hands, when he quietly but firmly grasped it.

Philip, however, was satisfied, and the regent had now but to announce to the young king the marriage arranged for him, and to obtain his consent to it.

## CHAPTER XII.

The New Cardinal Archbishop.—An Unwilling Bridegroom.—A Sorrowful Fate.—The Château de Rambouillet.—The Rambouillet Ménage.

BISHOP FLEURY, preceptor; the Abbé Fleury, confessor; the Maréchal Duc de Villeroy, governor; and, the Duc de Bourbon-Condé, nominal superintendent of the king's education, were assembled in the great hall at Vincennes, the king being seated in his chair of state, to receive the regent.

He entered accompanied by Dubois, whom he formally presented to the king. Then informed him that to the zeal of the Archbishop of Cambrai he owed the tranquillity of his kingdom; also the peace of the Church of France—the schism that had so long divided it being, by his earnest efforts, happily ended. “An important service indeed,” he continued, “for which his holiness had rewarded the archbishop with a cardinal's hat.”

The king bowed, but made no reply. The old maréchal stood beside him, as stiff, firm, and upright as the weight of his eighty years allowed. But neither he nor the Bishop of Fréjus appeared to notice the inquiring glances directed towards them by the young king, when the regent had concluded his address. Accustomed to read in their countenances what etiquette prescribed should be done, he supposed, as they

gave no sign of life, that the right and proper thing was to be silent.

The regent then entered on the subject of the marriage. Instantly young Louis' attention was roused. As the arrangements respecting it were explained to him, the poor boy's dismay increased. The idea of a wife filled him with terror. The etiquette always so persistingly enforced, he at once cast to the winds; and, jumping down from his chair of state, rushed to his preceptor. Leaning on his shoulder, and throwing his arms around him, he wept bitterly, and loudly complained of the unkindness of the regent.

All present endeavored, in turn, to console their young monarch. He was assured that the marriage itself was a far distant event; that his assent to it only was required at that time.

"Come now; come now, my master," said the old duke, coaxingly; "give your consent freely. You should do the thing with a good grace, my master."

At length, after much expostulation, persuasion, and entreaty, the bishop obtained from him a tearful and unwilling "yes." A short but more gracious reply had been prepared for him, with the view of sending it to Spain, to gratify his uncle, Philip V. But he refused to repeat it, and escaped from his tormentors to indulge his sorrow in solitude.

A council of regency was held the next day, for the purpose of receiving the king's announcement of his marriage. But his majesty's repugnance to matrimony appears even to have increased in the interval. It was with difficulty he was prevailed on to attend the council; and when there, not a word of the message from the throne would he utter. Silently he sat there, poor child, the tears running down his face.

And his lot, no doubt, was then felt by him to be cruel indeed; sorrow of the heart in those early years is often very acute. At last the maréchal was compelled to speak for him, and to inform the council of his majesty's intention to unite himself in marriage with the Infanta of Spain, etc., etc.

Still it was necessary he should notify that the announcement was made with his approval. He, however, vouchsafed no reply to the question; and the council, like the regent on the previous day, had to be content with a reluctantly whispered utterance, supposed to be "yes."

The exchange of the young brides-elect took place some months afterwards at the Ile des Faisans, where, sixty-two years before, was held the famous conference between Mazarin and Don Haro, which preceded the marriage of Louis XIV. with the Spanish Princess Maria Thérèse. The regent's daughter, Mdlle. de Montpensier, was twelve years of age; the Infanta, Maria Anna Victoria only three. There appears to have been no ceremony of betrothal. The king would probably have stoutly resisted that, as an attempt to actually marry him.

The little princess was taken to the Château de Rambouillet, about nine leagues from Paris, to be brought up there, under the *surveillance* of the Comtesse de Toulouse, a sister of the Duc de Noailles. The Comte de Toulouse, brother of the Duc du Maine, had but recently declared his marriage with this lady. It seems to have been considered a *mésalliance*, though the Count was but a legitimated prince. At all events, Rambouillet was rather looked down upon by Sceaux—so far, at least, as the Duchesse du Maine, princess of the blood, was concerned. But the Comtesse was



younger and prettier, which displeased the duchesse. She was infinitely more charming, too, and without that great lady's pretension to the reputation of a wit and woman of learning.

The park and forest of Rambouillet were of great extent; and as the king was already fond of the chase, he was a frequent visitor at the château. His youthful *fiancée* was, no doubt, placed there on that account, as well as because the home of the Comte de Toulouse and his wife was one of conjugal fidelity and happiness, of which instances were rare indeed in the society of that period.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Madame de Tencin.—Gambling at the Hôtel Tencin.—A Terrible Reputation.—“Le Grand Cyrus.”—“Le Comte de Comminges.”—A Delighted Audience.—Voltaire on his Knees.—Destouches and Marivaux.—Veteran Leaders of Society.—The Literary Ménagerie.—Madame de Tencin’s Suppers.—Up to the Ankles in Mud.—Fontenelle’s Mistake.

IN the midst of fine gardens, adjoining the extensive ones of the hôtel of the wealthy financier, Samuel Bernard, in the Place des Victoires, there stood, at the time of the regency, a very handsome residence, known as l’Hôtel Tencin. It belonged to Guérin de Tencin, Archbishop d’Embrun, and Chargé-d’Affaires of the Church at Rouen. To these high ecclesiastical dignities Tencin had been recently raised by the new Cardinal Archbishop Dubois, whom the regent had made first Minister of State. Few are said to have shown less respect for the priestly character than Archbishop Tencin. But he was a man of considerable talent, and his arguments had gone far to wring from Cardinal de Noailles an unwilling acceptance of the terrible Bull; therefore his election by Dubois.

Madame Alexandrine Guérin de Tencin did the honors of her brother’s hôtel, and her *salon* was one of the most famous of the regency and early part of the reign of Louis XV. Imitating the great Cardinal de Richelieu in the *salon* of Marion de l’Orme, the Car-

dinal Dubois established his literary police in the *salon* of Madame de Tencin.

This lady, so witty, so pleasing, receiving her guests so graciously, yet less with the air of the mistress of the house than with a certain graceful diffidence, as of a sister dependent on her brother, the archbishop, was one of the most finished of *intrigantes*. Destined from childhood for the cloister, she was brought up in the Convent of Grenoble, and entered on her novitiate at the usual age; but her repugnance to monastic life was so intense and persistent that, instead of taking the veil, she was allowed to leave the convent and become chanoinesse of Neuville, near Lyons. Soon after, she appeared in the fashionable world of Paris, and figured very prominently at the Court of the regent, amongst such noted women as the Marquises and Comtesses de Prie, de Parabère, du Deffant, d'Antragues, and others. As *amie intime* of Dubois, she had been the means of securing preferment for her brother, who had himself found favor with the regent, in the quality of political spy. Both brother and sister, as well as their patron Dubois, had profited largely by the *Système* Law.

There was yet another Hôtel Tencin, with fine grounds reaching to the gardens of the Capucine Convent—the space now occupied by the Rue de la Paix. This was the property of Madame de Tencin, and before her brother's elevation her *salon* was held there. While Law was Comptroller-general, gambling went on at this hôtel to an immense extent. Fortunes changed hands there more than once in the course of an evening, and in passing from one to another, a large share often fell into the lap of the lady who presided.

She speculated largely, and risked her valuable shares in the Royal Bank, apparently with extraordinary recklessness; but her lucky star was always in the ascendant, thanks to the private information she received from headquarters. Montesquieu and Voltaire were less fortunate when they yielded to the general allurements. This makes them so bitter when referring, not to Madame de Tencin, in whose *salon* they were often to be found, but to the famous *Système* itself.

Madame was desirous of being reputed firm in her friendships, but a terrible enemy. The nickname of "nun unhooded" had been applied to her, and it was said that "were it to her interest to poison a friend, she would do it; but in the politest and gentlest way possible." Strange tales, too, were afloat of dark deeds done in her *hôtel*. But we know that it was the fashionable mania of the *beau monde* of the regency to exaggerate its vices; as though the round unvarnished tale of its doings were not vicious enough. So that we are compelled to believe that that libertine circle, like a certain great potentate, was not so black as it was painted; and painted by itself. At all events, Madame Tencin was rich at the time now referred to. That would have absolved her, whatever misdeeds she had been guilty of; though society could in any case hardly cast stones at her—nor did it, for her *salon* was one of the most brilliant of the period.

Like that of Madame de Lambert it was considered a *salon* of good literature; but more philosophical, more liberal. Montesquieu, Fontenelle, Le Marquis de Pont-de-Veyle, and his brother le Comte d'Argental (the last two her nephews), were of the number of her guests. She had written some three or four short

tales, or romances of a sentimental kind. All of them at the time of their appearance were favorably received, both by her own circle and by the fashionable world generally. "Le Comte de Comminges" had the greatest reputation. La Harpe has considered it not inferior to "La Princesse de Cleves" of Madame de La Fayette. Indeed, the writings of those ladies were bound up together in an edition issued in Paris in 1786 or 1787.

Those who have dipped into those lackadaisical tales, will surely be of opinion that they are worthily united. One may be led on, if interested in the period, to wade through the ten portly volumes of Mdlle. de Scudéry's "Grand Cyrus;" being certain that while accomplishing that feat, a considerable knowledge of the social life of the early half of the seventeenth century has been acquired, and acquaintance made with most of the celebrities of that epoch. But the sickly sentimentality of La Fayette and Tencin is too overpowering. Should a dose of it ever be taken, another of sal volatile, as a corrective, should always be ready at hand, for of volatility there is less than none in "Les Chagrins d'Amour," "Le Comte de Comminges," etc.

Nevertheless, the last-named story is said to have once had a singular effect on a crowded *salon* of ladies and philosophers assembled to hear Madame de Tencin read it. The lady, herself calm and unmoved, read on to the end of the tale, her well-modulated voice giving due emphasis to its heart-rending love passages; her audience, meanwhile, being profoundly silent. She felt the compliment and exerted herself to deserve it.

As, with deep pathos, she pronounced the last words,

she raised her eyes from her manuscript, with an expression of grateful thanks, expecting to meet those of her friends suffused with tears. What, then, was her astonishment, her indignation, to find that scarcely an eye was open! The numerous assembly was for the greater part wrapped in peaceful slumber. The few that were not, were feebly struggling to keep open the lids that Somnus was gradually closing; or were endeavoring to hide with their handkerchiefs the shame of their irrepressible yawns. Amusement prevailed with Madame de Tencin over her first feeling of indignation; and, meanwhile, the cessation of the dulcet tones that had had so soothing an effect, together with her ringing laugh, aroused the sleepers.

“Charming story!” cried one. “Charming! Madame de Tencin, it is truly charming,” chimed in another.

“Thank you,” she said. “I shall re-christen this charming story and call on all present to subscribe to the propriety of its new title—‘A Remedy against Sleeplessness.’”

“Ah! Madame de Tencin,” replied Montesquieu, “I perceive that you are alluding to me. Allow me to assure you, allow me to persuade you, that if my eyes, as you may have remarked, were momentarily closed, they were not closed in sleep.”

“Of course not!” cried the rest of the company; “Madame de Tencin cannot think so.”

“Now, don’t look incredulous. Believe me it was merely to allow the mind, by the exclusion of outward objects, to dwell upon and enjoy more completely those exquisitely impassioned ideas with which you have endowed your hero, and the beauty of the language in which he expresses them.”

"Of course!" again echoed the company.

"Usbeck," \* she replied, laughingly, "shall make it the subject of another Persian letter. He shall declare that it would have pleased him much, but for its overpowering effect on his eyelids. And let all here confess the same. Now confess, confess, and I will pardon you all, and the archbishop shall give you absolution. I except Fontenelle, his eyes were open, if his ears were closed. And so were those of my fair Haidée, † though I imagine the Chevalier ‡ worked that miracle."

All the wits and rising literary men of the time were diligent frequenters of the *salon* of Madame de Tencin. Voltaire, of course, had gone on his knees to her. It was his habit, from youth to old age (Grimm says, "His breeches always bore marks of it"), to cast himself prostrate before beauty and wit, whether combined or separate. If either was wanting, he imagined it present, as in those strange lines to Mdme. du Châtelet:

"Ecoutez, respectable Emilie,  
Vous êtes belle ; ainsî donc la moitié  
Du genre humain sera votre ennemie." §

A pure poetical fiction, and a ludicrous one to those acquainted with this colossal *belle*.

Destouches, the dramatist, who had at least achieved

\* One of the personages of Montesquieu's "Lettres Persanes"—A satire on the regency.

† The beautiful Circassian, Mdlle. Aissé.

‡ Her lover, the Chevalier d'Aidye—Chevalier of the Order of Malta.

§ Listen, admired Emilie: you are beautiful, half the human race will therefore be your enemies.

one sensational success in his comedy of "Le Glorieux," was a constant visitor of this literary *salon*. Marivaux also, a *protégé* of Madame, ever torturing his wits to make a telling epigram of every sentence he uttered.

To her efforts, in some degree, was owing a certain short-lived vogue which his pieces occasionally obtained. They are bombastic, and affected in style. Nevertheless, Marivaux evidently was an observer of society. His conceit and pretentiousness are scarcely less evident. Yet one may detect in his plays the prevailing feeling of the time, in the effort he makes to show that the reputed best sentiments of human nature are but vanity; that those who put faith in them are the dupes of their own hearts; all that seemingly is so estimable in the character, so praiseworthy in the conduct, being a mere mask to conceal selfish ends.

Madame de Tencin was particularly zealous in her endeavors to forward the literary and social career of those young men who made their *début*, as it was termed, in her *salon*. It was a custom of that time for ladies who, in early years, had filled a distinguished position in society, to seek to continue their influence beyond that melancholy period (in France the terrible fortieth year) when the last flickering gleams of youth and beauty are fading away. They erected for themselves a new empire, as it were—formed a new and attractive *salon*, and as they advanced in years, became the oracles of polite society. The youthful nobility and young men of fortune frequented their circles "to form themselves," as the phrase went; as also to amuse themselves. To succeed in the good graces of one of these veteran



leaders of the *beau monde*, was to secure "a brevet of elegance, and knowledge of the world."

François Marie Arouet, so annoyed at not being born a gentleman, as Voltaire\* acquired in the *salons* the manners of one, and very early, "affected the gentleman of letters." There were others—Piron and Crebillon, for instance—to whom the tavern was a more congenial resort. The latter, rough and bearish; the former, witty, but of low, convivial tastes, and often launching an epigram at this fashionable world of learning. Equally would they have felt out of place in the elegant *salon* of Madame de Tencin, who was one of those women who took precedence in literary circles. Notwithstanding her sentimental novelettes, she was "*un bel esprit profond*"—far more vivacious and brilliant than Madame du Deffant, and having none of her real or affected fits of *ennui*.

Singularly enough, however, Madame de Tencin gave her distinguished circle of wits and men of letters the name of the menagerie. Stranger still, she put her learned animals into a sort of livery. And they did not regard it, apparently, as *infra dig.* to accept from her every year, as their New-Year's gifts, three ells of velvet each, for new small-clothes. Besides, she gave them, three times a week, and all the year round, a splendid supper—a supper that was renowned, even in those days of *recherchés petits-soupers*, and pure, sparkling, and iced champagne.

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\* The name of Voltaire is probably derived from a very small property—la ferme de Veautaire—in the district of Asnières-sur-Oise, about ten leagues from Paris, and which Voltaire inherited from a cousin; changing Veautaire into Voltaire, for euphony's sake, when assuming the name.

Montesquieu and Fontenelle she distinguished as her "animals *par excellence*." Fontenelle appears to have supped everywhere. He dined every Thursday at Madame de Lambert's, elsewhere probably on other days, and took his "English tea" (then beginning to be fashionable) in any *salon* where he found it introduced. He allowed nothing in the world to ruffle the placidity of his temper, and carefully guarded against any disturbing emotions.

Once a friend died suddenly, sitting beside him. He quietly desired his servants to remove him, and there was an end of it. By thus preserving the even tenor of his life, he coaxed on a weak constitution, year after year, until he had eked out a hundred. He was already as deaf as a post, but it amused his mind to see what was going on if he could not hear; so that there was no more constant frequenter of the *salons* than "le vieux Fontenelle." The one misfortune of his deafness was, that he always fancied he or his works were the subject of conversation, and it was fatiguing to make him hear and believe that he was under a mistake.

Mairan, being of the company assembled at Madame de Tencin's one evening, was relating a story of a peasant on a friend's estate who had greatly bewailed the death of a fellow-workman who had fallen into a ditch and was suffocated. "The mud was so deep," he said, "that it reached nearly to his ankles." "Surely, then," answered the master, "he could have stepped out of it, or you might have assisted him to do so." "Surely, as you say, I might," replied the man, "if he had not fallen into it head-foremost." The peasant's *naïve* remark on his companion's misfortune raised general laughter. Fontenelle, however,

very gravely said, "I perceive that M. Mairan is talking of my works."

This renewed the laughter. "My 'Treatise on the Worlds' does not please him, I suppose," he said, speaking very sulkily.

La Motte undertook the task of explaining to him the subject of conversation; but, after vociferating for some time in his ears, scarcely convinced him that he was in error, and that his well-deserved reputation was by no means being called in question by the friends and the admirers of his genius, who then surrounded him.

Had it been otherwise, he would not have allowed their censure to fret him, though he thought it right to make known his suspicions.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Exuberant Joy.—Dining in Public.—Public Rejoicings.—Loyalty still Flourishes.—The Maréchal de Villeroi.—When Louis XIV. was Young.—The Majestic Perruque.—A Grand Seigneur of the Old Régime.—Fireworks of the Eighteenth Century.—The Young King's Greeting.—The Grand Bow Louis XIV.—Villeroi Dismissed.—Un Abbé Elégant.—The Bishop Retires to Issy.—Coronation of Louis XV.—Death of Dubois.—Dubois' Immense Wealth.—Political Lessons.—The Regent First Minister.—Death of the Regent.

THERE are crowds in the Rue St. Honoré, in the Rue St. Antoine and the Place du Carrousel. One might fancy that the whole population of Paris was massed together in that vast multitude pressing around the Tuileries and filling every open space near it. But the throng—and a joyous throng it seems—still is increasing; every narrow, winding street and crooked, dark alley of this dear, delightful, dirty, old city sending forth its contingent to add to the number.

An Englishman well might wonder whence this swarming multitude came; where this vast assemblage of human beings found shelter. For Paris was never allowed to straggle, like London, in all directions, with its one or two-storyed houses. It had to shoot upwards, and as its population increased, to put story upon story to the extent of eight or ten. Some say, even one above that; perched aloft like a sky-raker above the gallant-top-royal sail of a big ship, and forming almost the only breezy dwelling-places old Paris could boast of

Evidently the disasters of the bygone year—disasters so great that even Dubois has been compelled to say, "Something must be done for the people"—have happily been followed by an event of unusual interest; some alleviation of the penury that prevails; some promise of returning national prosperity, to call forth such general rejoicing. In the exuberance of their joy, there are some simple folks who warmly embrace any stranger they meet, as though suddenly encountering long-lost friends.

Many a pretty girl, too, you observe, as she passes along, is startled by an unexpected embrace from some gay, gallant fellow. Not seldom the pretty girl resents this freedom with a vigor that makes the offender's ears tingle, and deservedly draws upon him the laughter and witty jests of his companions. But it is a good-tempered crowd, brimful of life and spirits.

The Café Procope and Café de la Régence are both full of guests, and here, as elsewhere, all is gaiety and mirth.\* But except at these cafés, and among the noisy itinerant vendors of cocoa, pastry, and sweets, little business is doing. Paris has heartily, and with its usual *abandon*, given itself up to pleasure. But if the shops, for the most part, are closed, many of the shopkeepers have brought out their tables and chairs, and are taking their dinner *al fresco*, any friend chancing to pass being pressed to sit down and share the meal with them.

This open-air feasting is attended with difficulties, for side-walks exist not; the streets are very narrow,

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\* These cafés of the regency were the first cafés established in Paris, and, like the London taverns of that date, were much frequented by literary men.

and slope down on either side towards the gutter in the centre. But the will to dine and be hospitable in public being there, the way to do so is, by some means, found out. "*Liberté, égalité, fraternité,*" generally prevail, and, practically, to a much greater extent than probably they will should those words, now fluttering on some people's lips, ever become the national motto.

Uninterruptedly these public rejoicings have been going on for the last fifteen days. The Church has, of course, borne its part in them; preaching endless thanksgiving sermons, and chanting numberless *Te Deums*. However, it is beginning to be the general opinion that there has been rejoicing enough. It is not wise to take an overdose, even of a good thing. So, in the evening, all is to terminate, with illuminations and fireworks, and a grand *fête* at the Tuileries. Better than all, the enthusiastic people are in hopes of getting just a glimpse of their king. The old duke—whose attachment to his youthful sovereign has secured for himself the attachment of the people—will no doubt bring him out on the balcony to gladden the eyes of his faithful lieges.

As for himself, poor boy, the ceremonial, the etiquette, and the fuss that surround him, weigh like a nightmare on his spirits. He will neither appear in the balcony, nor be present at the *fête* if he can have his own way. He would rather be milking his cow, or digging his garden. Nature, indeed, seems to have intended that a spade should be put in his hands when Fortune, in her lamentable blindness, made the mistake of handing him a sceptre. But the people, always so hopeful, are looking forward to the reign of Louis XV. for relief from those burdens which the

regency was to have removed. His majority is nigh at hand. But a boy of thirteen cannot of course be expected to take sole command of the helm of state; until he can do so, the people have faith in the guidance of Villeroy and Fleury.

Philosophy as yet has appeared only in the *salons*, where it is expanding under the fostering care of fine ladies. Loyalty still flourishes in France, and has found earnest expression in the enthusiasm with which the nation has celebrated the young king's restoration to health. Equally did it appear in the grief and anxiety generally exhibited while it seemed probable that his illness would terminate fatally. Ardent suppliants crowded the churches, and the nation cried to heaven, "Spare our king!" He is spared; and the reaction of boundless joy has followed the anxious fluctuations of hope and fear.

As usual, suspicions of poisoning were rife. They rested on the head of Dubois, who had suggested the removal of the royal patient from Vincennes to more airy quarters at Versailles. The suspicion of an evil intention may have been groundless, but as he attributed only base motives to others, he could not complain if he himself was misjudged. Had the king died, it is believed that Dubois could not have escaped with life from the vengeance of the infuriated people. It is singular that neither the regent nor any member of the government contributed anything towards the expenses of the public festival. The Duc de Villeroy, from his own private purse, shared them with the municipality of the Hotel de Ville, and even defrayed the cost of the oft-repeated prayers of the Church and the Te Deum.

The old maréchal, Duc de Villeroy, *un très grand*

*seigneur*, in his day, a very handsome man, and still (remember he has passed his eightieth year) of noble presence, is in manner a perfect specimen of the gallant manners of the old court. His father was governor to Louis XIV., which was chiefly that monarch's reason for appointing the son, who was brought up with him, to the same post in the household of his successor. The old duke is not so contemptible a personage as the slanderous pen of Saint-Simon represents him. He is probably somewhat vainglorious, and his heart swells with a pardonable pride when he tells of that brilliant time when he and Louis XIV. were young. He perceives that a great change has taken place, but he perceives no improvement; and his views are, in that respect, shared by many.

He, too, comforts himself with the hope that much good is laid up for France in the womb of the future. But his hope differs from that of the nation, in that it is based on his own constant efforts to train up his youthful charge in the traditions of the grand reign of the *Grand Monarque*, with a view to a return to the "Système Antiquaille."

How keen was the dear old *maréchal's* anxiety during the illness of young Louis, who it seems was suffering from a bad sore throat. (It would be called diphtheria in more enlightened days.) The *maréchal* undertook the office of head nurse, and had the broths, etc., made only by confidential people of his own. Yet, with all his vigilance, Madame de Parabère contrived to slip in and give the sick child some marmalade, which appears to have really done him good. It was in grateful remembrance of this and various other surreptitious little presents of *bonbons* and cakes, that Louis XV. was always so gracious to Madame de



Parabère; even when the court circle looked coldly upon her, because, having lost favor, places and pensions were no longer obtainable through her influence.

But the maréchal is now as jubilant as but a few weeks ago he was despondent; and in doing the honors of this grand *fête* in celebration of the king's recovery, acquits himself with admirable grace. His wrinkled brow, erst so careworn, is now smooth, fair, and polished; a full score of years seem to have passed away from it. He would have liked to resume the "majestic *perruque* of Louis XIV."—as De Tocqueville, sighing over its abandonment, regretfully calls it. But he knows that the ladies would laugh at him, and the graceless young wits make epigrams on the majestic wig. So he contents himself with the paltry *perruque* of diminished proportions now in vogue; thoroughly powdered at the top, and the ends gracefully tied up in a bag behind. And well it becomes his venerable, yet still handsome face.

His velvet coat is elaborately embroidered, and the lappels of his long satin vest, the same. His ruffles and the ends of his cravat are of *point d'Alençon* of the finest texture. A diamond star forms the button in his hat, and his sword has a diamond-set hilt. Diamonds fasten at the knee his puckered satin breeches; diamond buckles his red-heeled shoes; and the grand crosses of the Orders of the St. Esprit and St. Louis glitter in rubies and diamonds on his breast.

Stately and erect stands the old maréchal—a perfect picture of a *grand seigneur* of the *Old Régime*. He leads the young king by the hand to look at the illuminated gardens, and the river lighted up by some hundreds of illuminated boats, ranged on either side

of the stream. "Artificial swans and other aquatic birds float on the water." "Several whales, launched from behind screens or sheds on the shore, spout fire as they enter the stream."

A grand display of fireworks closes the *fête*. From drawings of set pieces used on this and other occasions, one must infer that the French pyrotechnists of that day excelled in their art. Yet facilities for doing so were few, compared with those afforded by the chemical discoveries and mechanical improvements of recent times. It is probable, however, that transparent paintings were frequently employed to form an effective centre to a border of fire. But whatever they were, they gave immense satisfaction to the people, who, attracted by the object of the *fête* in question, came from far and near to see them.

Never, perhaps, at any other period of his life, was Louis XV. so truly "the well-beloved" of the nation. How dense the crowd! What an interest the good people of Paris take in their king! Not only in the streets and in the vicinity of the palace; but at every house, heads, two, three, in rows, ranged one above another, peer forth from every window. The top of every wall is taken possession of, and the roofs of the houses are crowded. No slight projection where a foot can be placed, no piece of cornice which a hand can grasp, but finds some foolhardy enthusiast willing to risk life and limb to seize upon it—fortunate, indeed, if the only result of his scramble be that he sees, what so frequently is seen by scrambling in a crowd—nothing at all of what he looked for.

"There's the old *maréchal*!" exclaim several voices; the closely-packed mass of human beings beginning to move excitedly.

"Ah! he's bringing us the little king!" is shrieked in a woman's voice.

"Devil take the women! what are they doing here?" says somebody, striving to elbow the woman out of her place, in order to fill it more worthily himself. He sees that the *maréchal* is leading the king into the balcony.

Yes, both are there, hand in hand, representing the threshold of life and the brink of the grave. Louis is a handsome boy; rather small for his age, as was Louis XIV., who, from about his thirteenth year, sprang up apace—as this boy, probably, will do. He looks well in his white-plumed hat and embroidered blue velvet dress. His beautiful hair flows in its natural curls, unconfined by black riband and bag, and free from the starch-powder with which old and young are now so lavishly dusted. His jewels and grand crosses make a glittering show. He wears, you perceive, the "Sancy" in his hat. Its scintillation is wonderful, as the flickering lights in the balcony and the gleams from the illuminated trees fall upon it.

The people greet their young monarch with hearty enthusiasm. The air rings with a cry of delight from thousands of voices. It is, doubtless, a gladdening sound to the heart of the old duke. But its suddenness and wildness startle the child. He seems to be appealing to his governor; then, advancing a step, raises his hat with much grace. (*Villeroi* has taught him the grand bow *Louis Quatorze*.)

Louder, far louder than before, is the people's responsive burst of joy. The duke drops the king's hand. Louis, released, seizes the opportunity of escaping, with a rush, from the terrible din. Though somewhat disconcerted, the duke turns with a benig-

nant air towards the admiring multitude, and, with a certain dignified condescension, that should surely atone for the want of ceremony in royalty's departure, raises his hat, bends slightly forward, then decamps to discover the hiding-place of his king.

The king has taken refuge in the Salle des Gardes, and is reposing in a chair in a quiet corner. The noise and excitement of the almost delirious multitude surrounding the Tuileries so agitated him that he was seized with giddiness in the head. He declared "That he couldn't stay there." However, he was sufficiently himself again in the course of half an hour to gratify the earnestly-vociferated prayer of the frantic people that the *maréchal* would again gladden their eyes with a sight of their king. Yielding, therefore, to these coaxing words—"Master, dear master! come now, show yourself just for a moment, only one moment, to your good people of Paris, who love you so much, and are so longing to see you!"—he gave his hand to his governor, stepped out on the balcony, and received the reward of his condescension in another uproarious ovation.

Not long after the *Maréchal de Villeroi* had given so signal a proof of his loyalty and attachment to the young king, he was dismissed to his government. His exaggerated fears lest the king should be poisoned, made him unwilling to allow even the regent to see him at any time, unless he were present at the interview. The regent, much annoyed, resented this, and insisted on his leaving the apartment. Later in the day, an officer arrived with a *lettre-de-cachet*, when, to his extreme mortification, the old duke was obliged at once to step into the carriage waiting for him, and proceed to Bayonne—there to remain until further orders.

The Duc de Charost was appointed to succeed to the post of governor. But the king took Villeroi's departure greatly to heart. Whatever he felt, he rarely exhibited any violent emotion. On this occasion, he laid his face against the back of a chair and silently wept. He would not eat, he would not speak. When entreated to go out, or to amuse himself in some way, he refused, and remained awake, weeping and sobbing, the whole night through. Still further to increase his distress, he learned the next morning that his preceptor also had left.

Between the duke and the bishop there existed a friendship of very long standing. It dated indeed from the time when Fleury—a remarkably handsome man, with a fondness, which with excellent taste he ever retained, for ladies' society—was favorably received as "*un abbé élégant*," and a desperate flirt, in the *boudoir* circle of Madame de Villeroi. She was considerably younger than the duke. But of course her flirting days were now over. Not exactly (so scandal whispered) were those of Fleury. Yet though he did not now flirt with the duchess, they remained very firm friends. It was probably, therefore, as much for her sake as for the duke's, that, at the time of their appointment as preceptor and governor, he had entered into a mutual promise with the duke that if either was dismissed from his post by the regent, the other should resign.

Consequently, as soon as the duke was exiled, the bishop hastened away to his little estate at Issy, thence intending, probably, to send in his resignation. He took no leave of his royal pupil, as he may have foreseen that the separation would be but a short one. And just so it proved. Louis regretted his fussy, but

kind old governor; but Fleury, so amiable and estimable, if far too indulgent, had stood towards him in the place of a parent, and had gained his affection as such. His grief, his despair, was so great when informed that he was absent, and did not, it was supposed, intend to return, that he was pacified only by the immediate despatch of a messenger to Issy, with a letter from himself, requiring the bishop immediately to come back from Vincennes.

Of course he did not refuse obedience to the royal command; and friendship—even for an old flame—could not have asked it of him. The preceptor was received by his pupil with open arms, and with signs of joy more evident than had ever been observed in him before. The Duc de Charost took the opportunity of making himself agreeable to the young king, by appearing to share in his joy, and the banished duke had the mortification of knowing that he was not so necessary to the happiness of his king as he had fondly supposed.

The regent, from his mode of life, had become more and more indisposed to be troubled with cares of state. Therefore, shortly after he had roused himself to resent with so much harshness, though naturally disposed to leniency, the foolish suspicions of the old *maréchal*, he appointed Dubois first minister—in fact, gave up the regency into his hands, that he might be more fully at liberty to devote himself entirely to his pleasures. From the despotic manner in which the cardinal immediately began to exercise his newly-acquired power, it was very soon perceived that his ambitious aims were not yet satisfied; and that he would not scruple, in order successfully to realize them, to sacrifice the regent himself.

On the 26th of October, 1722, Louis XV. was crowned at Rheims, with much pomp and ceremony. Comte d'Argenson, at this time, compared him, in appearance, to Cupid. Yet Cupid enveloped in a gold-embroidered ermine-lined mantle of state, with the crown of Charlemagne on his head, and bearing a sceptre and "hand of justice," would surely be rather overdressed—his usual costume being so scanty; rarely anything more than a pair of wings, a quiver full of arrows, and his bow. Dubois made a great figure on this occasion; taking his place in the cavalcade amongst the highest nobles in the land. On the 22d of February following, the king, being then thirteen years and twelve days old, a *lit-de-justice* was held, and he was publicly declared of age.

Dubois, it would seem, needed only opportunity to prove himself capable of greater things than hitherto he had been supposed to be. The regent's power at an end, he gave promise of becoming a most able minister of state, and desirous of adapting his conduct to the dignity of his position. But a long course of dissipation had undermined his constitution, and he died on the 10th of August, 1723, in his sixty-seventh year, a few hours after enduring the agony of a painful operation. He either refused the sacraments of the church, or on some frivolous pretext eluded partaking of them.

The wealth amassed by Dubois, during his short tenure of power, was enormous. Besides a large sum of money in his strong box, he possessed costly furniture, and a quantity of gold and silver plate of the most artistic workmanship; precious stones of rare beauty and value; sumptuous equipages, and (then most envied of all, by the nobility) the largest and

finest stud in France. Rich *abbayes* and lucrative appointments and places, both civil and ecclesiastical—lavishly bestowed on himself—brought him an immense revenue, in addition to his large pension for promoting the political views of England with reference to France. He had, doubtless, dreamed of living yet many years to enjoy this vast wealth, and of out-vying, in ostentatious splendor and the magnitude of their power, both Richelieu and Mazarin.

This was at a time when the State, still suffering from the ruinous results of the "Système Law," could neither pay the salaries of its officers, nor the annuities of its pensioners. But having provided liberally for himself, Dubois had some project *in petto*, which was to restore the credit of the government, and gradually to refill its coffers.

Meanwhile, he had very judiciously arranged, for the instruction of the young king, a series of what may be termed political lessons. They took place at Versailles, three times a week; and, to impress upon him their importance, a certain etiquette was prescribed for them. An arm-chair was placed for his majesty at the centre of a table. On his right sat the regent; on his left Monsieur le Duc. Opposite, on a folding seat, sat Dubois, the Bishop of Fréjus on one side, the Duc de Charost on the other, also seated on folding chairs.

But it was difficult to awaken an interest in so dry a theme, in the mind of a youth who had not been trained in habits of application, and who was besides indolently disposed. He listened to the subject laid before him with an air of lazy resignation to his fate, occasionally glancing at Fleury, as though seeking in his benignant face consolation and sympathy, to enable



him to hold out to the end of the session. He asked for no explanation, yet gave no signs of understanding, or indeed of heeding the questions discussed. Nevertheless it is probable that the political acumen which he is said to have exhibited in after years, when amusing himself with his secret diplomacy, may have been acquired at this time.

The regent, according to some writers, regretted Dubois, others say that he jested when he heard of his death, exclaiming, "So the devil has carried off my jester at last!" But his own health was in a very precarious state, his face had become of a purple red, a sort of stupor often overcame him, and his head was bowed forward on his chest. Everything so disgusted him, that he was scarcely capable of either fretting or jesting.

He, however, assumed Dubois' post of first minister; made an effort to reform his mode of life; and, in order not to set a bad example to the young king, who now sojourned more frequently at the Tuileries, he even, we learn, went so far in his reform as to content himself with but one *maîtresse-en-titre*, Madame d'Antragues—in the Roman states, Duchesse de Falarì. She was the wife of a financier, to whom Clement XI., for some service of a financial nature, had given the title of Duke.

But the excesses of the *petits-soupers* still went on, and the regent drank the usual quantity of his favorite *vin d'Al*. His physicians warned him that dropsy or apoplexy would be the result of his intemperance. "Not dropsy," he said, "it is too lingering; death stares one in the face too long, and I had hoped to meet death from a cannon-ball on the battle-field." And a death as sudden was granted him. Sitting be-

side the Duchesse de Falari, he suddenly exclaimed, "Madelon! Madelon!—save me!" and fell dead at her feet.

No physician was at hand. A lackey in attendance opened a vein with a penknife; but the regent never spoke more. As he had desired, death's shaft had been swift and sure. Thus passed away, in his forty-ninth year, Philippe Duc d'Orleans—a man of great abilities, amiable disposition, and much personal fascination; but whose shame or misfortune it was to disbelieve in the existence of virtue, and thus to become a corrupter of the morals of the age, by the evil example of a depraved life and the parade of atheistic principles.

The young king regretted the regent, and always spoke of him with affection; and many of those who most lamented the criminal weakness of his character were nevertheless his sincerely attached friends.

## CHAPTER XV.

Monsieur le Duc.—Taking Time by the Forelock.—The New Limits of Paris.—The Street Lamp Invented.—Dark Streets of Old Paris.—Crossing the Gutters.—What became of the Children.—The Liveliest City in Europe.—Shopkeepers' Signboards.—The Lieutenant of Police.—The Terrible "Damné."—Police Espionage.—A Keeper of Secrets.

BUILDING in Paris, beyond certain limits, had been rigorously prohibited during the last reign. An inclination to expand beyond them had been resolutely checked by the decree of 1672. The old walls were then thrown down, and the space assigned by the great Louis as the extreme fixed boundary of the city and its faubourgs was defined and planted. Thus far, and no farther, should the good people of Paris be allowed to extend their dwellings. Upwards they might rise—as far as Heaven's portal, if they could reach it; but not a foot nearer the sacred precincts of Versailles should they be allowed to approach.

During the regency the prohibition was not strictly enforced. Probably it was looked upon as altogether obsolete, when, most unexpectedly, the edict was renewed at the instance of the Duc de Bourbon. M. le Duc was now first minister, though possessing no especial capacity for the post. He was without experience, and known only for his rancorous hatred towards the Duc du Maine, and the deep interest he had taken in the *Système* Law. He had supplanted the duke, and by the *Système* had added to his slender

means some two or three millions of livres; he also raised the amount of a small income to a very handsome revenue by exchanging Law's paper for fine estates. There was a ferocity in his disposition that yielded only to the influence of his mistress, Madame de Prie, who governed him absolutely.

Having a fancy to govern France also, she despatched her lover, as soon as it was ascertained that the regent was actually dead, to seek the king, in order to request for himself the vacant post of first minister. The young monarch, who was engaged with his preceptor, was greatly embarrassed by the request, and consulted the countenance of Fleury for his answer. But the bishop neither by word nor look expressed approval or disapproval. His face wore its usual calm and benignant expression. His eyes remained half closed, as though but partly awakened from a comfortable snooze, and desiring only to renew it. The king may have understood this as a nodding assent, as he at once, without speaking, nodded an affirmative to M. le Duc's application.

Most conveniently, the commission was ready, merely requiring to be filled up; possibly it had been intended for Fleury himself. However, it was signed on the instant, and the Duc took the customary oath; then departed to congratulate his pretty mistress on the triumph of their *coup-de-main*, and on her wisdom in advising him to take time by the forelock.

It had been thought probable that the Duc de Chartres, the regent's son, might, on his father's death, be roused from his devotions by ambition and the desire of succeeding to his post. But the young duke (he was now twenty-four) continued, as Duc d'Orleans, to lead the same life of seclusion. Some years before,

seduced by the regent's example, he had temporarily shared in his and his *roués'* excesses. But, disgusted by their extreme licentiousness, he withdrew from the court, and led the life of a penitent, controlled entirely by Jesuit priests. The death of his father produced no change in his conduct or views. He could scarcely, however, be considered sane, being under the influence of some extraordinary delusions. The wits gave him the name of "D'Orleans de Ste. Geneviève."

In what way neglect of the restrictions on building beyond the old limits of Paris concerned M. le Duc or Madame de Prie does not appear. But as self-interest was the guiding star of both, it may be imagined that the value of property belonging to one or the other was jeopardized by it. That which, owing to laxity during the regency in respect of new buildings, had already been done by those who sought quietude and a breath of fresh air—then only obtainable in Paris in the gardens and grounds of convents and the *hôtels* of the nobility—could not be easily undone. New limits were therefore marked out and planted, soon after Louis XV. was declared of age—and Paris was allowed to spread, some hundred yards or so, in the various directions already built upon.

Paris at this time—1724—was noisier and dirtier than in the preceding century. The streets had no names affixed to them until 1729. Some unusually conspicuous signboard, a neighboring convent, or the *hôtel* of a grandee, served to distinguish those which were less generally known than the streets specially inhabited by certain trades—such as the Rues de la Tisseranderie, de la Ferronnerie, Quai des Orfèvres, etc. Numbering the houses was not attempted for many a long year after; but every house had a sign

of some sort, which answered the purpose of a number.

In 1745 the Abbé Matherot de Préguey invented the street-lamp. Until then, an occasional tallow candle, placed in a lantern and suspended aloft some twenty-five feet above the roadway, was the only light the municipality vouchsafed to guide the footsteps of belated citizens over the marshes and quagmires of the dusky streets. And even these candles, however far they might throw their feeble beams, and shine, as Portia says, like "a good deed in a naughty world," could not always be depended upon. They were often puffed out when the wind was strong; and sometimes a thief (in the candle) guttered them out. The company of lantern-bearers was not then thought of, much less established; so that, unless the midnight wanderer had his own private lanterns and bearers, as many persons had, or carried a lantern himself, what a sad predicament he must have been in!

To heap the agony still higher, imagine the rain coming heavily down. That, of course, would put out the candles. Some one, perhaps, may reply, "No one in his senses would, in that case, go out on foot."

True; but rain often comes on unexpectedly. Paris, too, was becoming exceedingly old. Many of its dilapidated wooden houses with plastered fronts—dating not less than two hundred years back—appeared to be on the point of falling. With every fall of rain there came crumbling down a portion of this frontage—to the great danger, and frequently great damage, of passers-by. Deaths from street accidents were not unfrequent. But they were little heeded by the police, and rarely was any enquiry made concerning them.

The danger was increased when darkness and rain

came on; the more so as the only means for carrying off the rain from the house was by projecting spouts from the roof and from every story. These numerous cascades formed together a powerful cataract, while the central gutter would often be swollen into a rapid rivulet, or even a river, carrying before it the accumulated dirt of months. In the daytime several planks fastened together would be thrown over the stream, forming a sort of rude and ready bridge. Where these were not placed, there was no help for either lady or gentleman indisposed or unable to wade across, but to be carried over the stream on the back or in the arms of some dirty, sturdy fellow, always in waiting, and willing to perform this service for two or three *sous*.

Boileau Despréaux, in his "Embarras de Paris," had little praise to bestow on the gay city in 1660. Dufresny and Montesquieu, sixty years later on, in the same satirical vein, make their Siamese and Persian speak no less unfavorably of it. Saint-Foix, Duclos, Mercier, Barbier, and other writers, even to the dawn of the revolutionary times, take up the theme in a similar strain.

To be freed from squalor and pestilence—to become, in its outward aspect, a cleanly, healthy city, as well as, socially, a rich, gay, and delightful one—monastery walls had yet to be demolished, and the rule of the Bourbon kings of France to end.

Notwithstanding, the population of Paris had increased. But, as observed by the Marquis de Mirabeau (father of the great orator, who had so many schemes for regenerating France, but not one for managing his household), what became of the children?—so few of them ever were seen. The mortality

amongst children was, no doubt, fearful in those pent-up streets, where every noisome trade was carried on with impunity; one of the most thriving, and as offensive as any, the tallow-chandler's, being everywhere in full work. Still, few young children were seen, because all who could afford the expense had their infants reared in the country. The necessity for doing so then, if the parents studied their health, originated the custom that yet survives, though the necessity for it has passed away.

But the population of Paris was often considerably increased by immigrants. What names, anything but French, are now borne by some of the old families of France?—Italian, German, Polish, English, Irish, Spanish. There was something attractive in the old city, in spite of its many shortcomings; and those who settled in it speedily became Parisians, both in their habits and feelings. On Sundays and *fête* days they left the close streets, and took their pleasure in the various gardens and places of amusement beyond the city limits, or barriers. The air is light and stimulating there. It has a pleasant effect on the spirits, similar to that of good champagne, only far more abiding.

The sight of the offensively dirty streets by day, their gloom and danger at night, might well have deterred intending settlers from taking up their abode in them, and have repelled foreign visitors from Paris. But from the time of the regency foreign visitors flocked to it, and it was reputed the liveliest city in Europe.

One must remember that the nights were not always dark; that a torrent was not always rushing down from the tall, dilapidated dwellings, or a gulf stream



always rolling through the grand central gutter. The silvery moonbeams sometimes peered down into the ins and outs of the nine hundred mazy streets, investing them with an air of mystery and romance.

The numerous signboards had then a singular effect. Many, indeed, were not boards at all; but figures of men and women and animals, or of such objects as the trader dwelt in. St. Anthony and the pig, at the pork-butcher's, was a frequent and appropriate sign, rudely carved, or brilliantly daubed. But whatever the sign, it was thrust as far as possible from the house, every shopkeeper striving for prominence. In the flickering light of the moon these signs—for instance, some tall, stately "Justice," with scales, denoting that good weight and good measure were dealt out there; some dignified St. Anthony; "the good woman," without her head; or a cavalier with drawn sword—often proved objects of terror to the timid, and to those who were strangers in the land. They were the continual cause of squabbles, though with little or no result, between the tradespeople and the police; their intrusion on the narrow space of the streets often making it difficult for carriages to pass each other.

One feels almost surprised to hear that there was a police, the need of reform being so glaring, and the utter neglect of every means for effecting one, equally so. Yet the police was a very respectable force, as far as numbers went; highly trained too, and remarkably vigilant. The head of it, the Lieutenant of Police, was always a man of distinction. To fill the post with ability, no ordinary qualifications were needed; and generally the right man seems to have been found for it, and to have acquitted himself of

his duties *con amore*; the changes being fewer in this office than in any other in the government.

But of all who filled the post of Lieutenant of Police, the man whom nature seems specially to have destined for it was Marc René, Comte d'Argenson. He was appointed to succeed La Reynie, in 1699, by Louis XIV., and held the office until 1718, when he resigned. The system of secret police organized by him (his thousands of invisible agents being of both sexes, and of every station of life) was considered so perfect by his able successors, Hérault, Berryer, Sartines, Le Noir, and De Crome, by whom it was continued until the eve of the Revolution, that they could find nothing to add to or take from it, that did not in some way mar its perfection—so cleverly, wheel within wheel, was it regulated, like a wonderful piece of mechanism.

Saint-Simon asserts that there was not a resident in Paris, of whose habits and most private affairs d'Argenson could not obtain the fullest information at a few minutes' notice. His face was so repulsively ugly that it might with propriety "have belonged to one of the judges of the infernal regions." It made him a terror not only to evil doers, but by the *sobriquet* it obtained for him "Le Damné," served also the nurses for frightening fractious, naughty children into being quiet and good.

It was that fearful scourge of humanity, the small-pox, which had made such havoc of d'Argenson's face. One would not be surprised to learn that he was tyrannical. For to become so disfigured as to be an object of disgust or terror to one's fellow creatures, is enough to turn sour every drop of the milk of human kindness, however abundantly it flow in the breast.

But this model Lieutenant of Police was one of the kindest, most considerate and humane of men; extremely witty and amusing also, and much sought after in society. One can imagine, however, that he was more feared in the *salons* than loved. He had numerous anecdotes generally to relate, always of nameless persons. And it is said, that he sometimes chose this way of putting people who were present, and who would understand his allusions, on their guard against an injudicious freedom of speech. There was no functionary of the State who possessed so much real power as the Lieutenant of Police; and it does not appear that it was ever materially abused by any one of the six men to whom it was successively confided from 1699 to 1789.

Yet, at the best, this wonderfully organized system of police was but an elaborate political and social espionage which could be tolerated only under a despotism. It was a prying into family concerns; a peering into private letters, even tracing the mysterious course of amorous intrigues, rather than the seeking out of crime and the adopting the readiest means for preventing or punishing it.

It is true that while diving into the concerns of persons who were accused of no crime, or gathering up in *cafés* and private *salons* stray words indiscreetly uttered (of no import probably at the time, but which were docketed and stowed away for use, if wanted) the secret agents sometimes stumbled on other matters, of which it might be desirable their chief should be informed. But on the whole, the working of Comte d'Argenson's vast and intricate system, served less to further the ends of justice, to maintain good order in the city, and to afford protection to the in-

habitants, than to furnish a pleasant dish of scandal for the amusement of his majesty every morning.

Louis XIV. delighted in it. The regent cared not for it; he gave too much cause for scandal himself. But young Louis XV., whom it was of course necessary to initiate in the mysteries of the secret police, was beginning to show a taste for reading other people's letters, and learning, thus surreptitiously, the private sayings and doings of the court and society.

Yet there were secrets that both d'Argenson and his successors kept religiously, as it is termed, that is, locked up in their own heart of hearts. For they were merciful men; their large experience having taught them the weakness of human nature, and especially the weakness to which poor woman is prone. So, as long as she did not interfere in politics, any other secrets a fair lady might have were safe in the keeping of the Lieutenant of Police.

## CHAPTER XVI.

The Palais Royal Gardens.—Married, but Unattached, Couples.—*Que voulez-vous? C'est la Mode.*—Le Haute Bourgeoisie.—Ennobled Bourgeoisies.—Summer Evening Strolls.—The Chestnut Avenue.—Expulsion of the Infanta.—Supplanting the Bishop.—The Regent's Daughters.—Mdlle. de Vermandois.—Portrait of Louis XV.—The Infanta.—The Rambouillet Circle.—Marie Leczinska.—The Bishop of Fréjus.—The King's Preceptor.—The Royal Bride.—The Young Bridegroom.—The Queen's Dowry.

How poor, how tawdry, the most brilliant illumination of the trees of the Tuileries and Palais Royal, compared with the silvery lustre of the moonlit gardens, on a soft summer night! How delightful to saunter in that avenue of grand old chestnuts. The sky so intensely blue, the air so clear, that every glittering star seems to hang by an invisible thread from the vault of heaven.

It was on nights like this, and in these same gardens that, eighty years ago, Anne of Austria (who with the child Louis XIV. and Cardinal Mazarin, then lived in the Palais Royal) used to promenade from midnight till two in the morning, chatting and laughing with the ladies and gentlemen of her household.

Some alterations have been made in the interval, both in the palace and gardens. The regent who, notwithstanding his lamentable excesses, was a man of much taste and culture, has left a very fine collec-

tion of pictures and objets d'art, as well as a museum of natural history. His pious successor, whose elevated notions of religion lead him to set a good example to his household, and to seek the favor of heaven for himself, by crawling from his rooms to his chapel, on his knees, is scarcely capable of appreciating the treasures of art he has inherited. The regent also enlarged and replanted the gardens, and built that fine conduit house which supplies the fountains both here and at the Tuileries.

How the falling drops and the feathery spray sparkle in the moonlight! One might fancy them a shower of diamonds, outvying those that glitter and flash in the ladies' dresses, and in the gentlemen's too—for there is a very grand company here. For-saking the theatres and the *salons*, the ladies order their carriages, and, escorted by their *amis intimes*, drive hither in the calm summer twilight, to gossip and flirt under the broad spreading trees. But when the moonbeams light up the scene, the fashionable promenade is thronged, and often the evening saunter is extended far into the night.

No lady has the bad taste to appear here with her husband. What would the world say to so *bourgeois*-like a proceeding? The gentleman himself would be highly amused at the idea of dancing attendance on his wife. He has, of course, other engagements; just as she has—metal more attractive elsewhere.

Should one of these fashionable, married, but unattached, couples meet, perchance, in the course of the evening, it will appear that they are on excellent terms. Note the ceremonious politeness with which they exchange smiles and bows; surely it leaves nothing to desire. Even should it happen that the hus-

band of the lady is escorting the wife of her own *ami intime*, the spectacle only becomes more interesting. From the formal courtesies of the ladies, and profoundly low bows of the gentlemen, they seem to say, "I wish you much joy of so pleasant a companion," and, pleased with the thought, pass smilingly on, each couple exchanging significant glances when it turns its back on the other. "Can such things be and overcome us," etc., somebody exclaims. *Mais! Que voulez-vous? C'est la mode.*

Fashion, as all the world knows, is a tyrannical sovereign who has dethroned good taste without securing a firm grasp of its sceptre. But for good or for evil, in manners or dress, or whatever pertains to social life, the decrees of fashion, cost what it may, must be obeyed. In the matter of dress, what sacrifices are not the slaves of fashion willing to make to their deity! If a decree go forth that the fair sex, fat and thin, put themselves into *paniers*, or gigantic bakers'-baskets, whose modern equivalent was the recently-discarded balloon-like crinoline—how readily do old and young, rich and poor, hasten to obey.

If again, as in the present day, a kind of amphibious party-colored garment, or "*demi-culotte* with a mermaid tail," be the costume prescribed for general wear, immediately the requisite amount of immoral courage is mustered up, and both the obese and the scraggy, the tall and the short, appear in our streets thus—to say the least—unbecomingly arrayed.

At one time it was the fashion to be timid and nervous, and to have fits of the vapors; to cultivate a fastidious and over-strained refinement of speech, amounting to affectation. At another, the younger ladies are dauntless, daring, and afraid of nothing, and

affect the slang of the stable. However, let it pass, *c'est la mode*; a change will occur by and by, and, it may be hoped, for the better. But a truce to these sage reflections. Ere we grow melancholy, we will return to the company in the gardens.

A decree of 1720 forbade the *bourgeoisie* to wear diamonds, pearls, or other jewels, or to use either gold or silver plate; it was hoped that they would exchange these superfluities for shares in the Royal Bank. The decree has been but little regarded, you will observe.

There are ladies here of the *haute bourgeoisie* who, not only in refinement of manners, but in elegance and richness of toilet, might well be ranked with the most distinguished of the nobility. Indeed, several have lately been promoted to the honor—if honor it may be termed—of marrying into noble houses. For the *Système* Law, without having actually ruined them, left many old French families in circumstances so extremely embarrassed, that, as it was customary to say, “They were compelled to fatten their estates”—in other words, retrieve their losses by marrying the heir of the encumbered estates to the richly endowed heiress of a wealthy *bourgeois*. There was nothing that derogated from the dignity of the noble in such an alliance—the high descent of the family shedding its lustre on the bride, effacing the stigma of her plebeian birth, and conferring nobility on her children.

The ennobled *dames bourgeoises*, of course, are entitled to avail themselves of the privileges of the elevated class into which they have been so graciously received; and very readily they do so. Instances have been known of their having gambled away, in a very



short time, all the wealth brought by marriage into the husband's noble family—the "*ami intime*" securing a very fair share of it. But when *bourgeoise* marries *bourgeois* you will rarely fail to meet her enjoying a quiet walk, or a country ramble, with no other "intimate friends" than her husband and children.

On calm summer evenings, all who are not too weary and toilworn—for it is a hard-working city no less than a gay one—leave their close, noisome dwellings, and come to these gardens—or to those of the Tuileries; to the Place Royale; the boulevards (the Champs Elysées were not then planted), and wherever any open space occurs, to refresh themselves with a stroll in the cool evening air. The French look so much at home when sitting out-of-doors, in their public gardens, or outside their *cafés*. One can scarcely wonder that casual visitors from a country whose people are of a less expansive nature, and in whom the social instinct is much less developed, were long under the delusion that the French had no idea of a home, and of that mythical thing the English call comfort.

The close quarters in which, by royal edict, a century and a half ago it was enacted that the inhabitants of Paris should dwell, no doubt induced the habit of congregating on every opportunity wherever a breath of the fresh air of heaven could be had. It led also to the rapid increase in the number of *cafés* which took place at that time, and superseded the taverns, formerly the resort of literary men. Now, with the exception of a few, who, like Piron and Crébillon, prefer wine and beer to coffee and cocoa, they are frequented only by a noisy company of a very inferior grade.

At the period now in question the garden of the Palais Royal is an exceedingly attractive one, well laid out and planted, the trees generally fine, and the chestnut avenue in full beauty. It is the promenade especially favored by the *beau monde*. There are seats here and there, and all fully occupied. A numerous company saunters up and down, and there is an immense deal of talking and laughing. Conversation is carried on in no very low key, though all are aware that the watchful eyes and the listening ears of the Lieutenant of Police and his myrmidons are always and everywhere open. "Remember, that wherever you are, there am I!" said Hérault, d'Argenson's successor, to one whom he warned in private of the danger of being indiscreetly communicative in public.

But when and where since that remote time when Eve, our first mother, flourished, was it ever known that restraint could be imposed on the tongue of any one of her daughters inclined to prattle? The theme now on every lady's lips is the expulsion, as they term it, of the young Infanta and the king's possibly approaching marriage. It is discussed, too, with wonderful freedom, as are its originators, M. le Duc and Madame de Prie. We learn from these ladies, so indignant, apparently, and all so eager at once to express an opinion on the subject, that the young Infanta, now in her seventh year, has been sent back to Spain. This step has been taken suddenly and abruptly. But by way of soothing the wounded feelings of her parents, orders were given that the discarded little princess should receive on her journey home the honors due to a queen of France.

The reason alleged for her return is similar to that conveyed to the Emperor Maximilian in the message

of Charles VIII., when he sent back to Vienna the little Austrian princess to whom he had been betrothed in his childhood, and who also had been brought up in France. He was twenty-two, he said, and desirous of marrying, but thought a bride in her twelfth year too young for him. (His choice had fallen on a princess of sixteen, Anne, reigning Duchess of Brittany, the duchy by this marriage becoming annexed to the French monarchy.) This probably is the precedent of which M. le Duc and his mistress availed themselves when, with the view of displacing Bishop Fleury, his influence being paramount with the young king—now in his fifteenth year—it occurred to them that by marrying this youth to a princess of their own selection, they would be able to supplant the bishop and rule the king through her.

The Infanta had nearly reached the Spanish capital before the king and queen were aware of her departure from France. Letters announcing it were forwarded to the Abbé de Livry-Sanguin, French Ambassador at Lisbon, with orders to pass over to Spain and deliver them to Philip V. The Abbé is now returned to Paris, to make report of the kind of reception he met with at Madrid. Secrets will ooze out, and the Abbé's story, which M. le Duc would fain have suppressed, is the principal theme of conversation this fine June evening with every sauntering group in the gardens.

"The Abbé wept," says one. "He threw himself at the king's feet when he made known the object of his mission."

"Of course he did," is the reply; "it is but the ordinary etiquette."

"Yes, but weeping is not. And the king, when he knew how great an affront had been put on him and

the Infanta, wept himself. He has but lately left the monastery, as you are aware, to resume the crown of Spain, the Pope, on the death of his son from small-pox, having absolved him from his vow of abdication. He was so deeply moved that he refused to receive the letters from the Abbé. The queen was sent for. The letters were delivered to her, and she read them with much emotion. The Abbé declares—I had it from himself—that he was heartily ashamed of his mission, and surprised that the bishop did not prevent it.”

“*Chut, chut!*” exclaim the more discreet listeners.

But the well-informed oracle continues: “De Livry was ordered to leave the king’s presence, and to quit the country without delay. All Frenchmen in Spain have had orders to do the same.”

“And where is Mdle. Beaujolais, the betrothed of Don Carlos?”

“She is coming back; the marriage is broken off. Her sister, the young widowed queen, is with her. They have proved themselves worthy daughters of the regent. Philip sends them both out of Spain in the same carriages and with the same escort that served for the ignominious expulsion of the Infanta from France.”

“Have you seen or heard of the Marquise lately?” enquires one lady of another, in an undertone.

“*Ma chère*, she is scouring the country in search of a queen of France.”

“I heard that she had been to Fontevraud, and was very haughtily received there.”

“Yes, she fancied that Mademoiselle de Vermandois, though five years older than the king, might answer her purpose as queen. But the marquise met with a rebuff that not only upset her plans, but disconcerted

her greatly. The princess expressed much surprise that her brother's mistress should presume to visit her. When M. le Duc heard of it, he got into one of his amiable tempers. 'Let her then,' he said, 'remain where she is, and rule the nuns of Fontevraud.'"

"But Fleury?"

"Fleury declines to interfere in any project of marriage; but it is certain that no marriage will take place of which he disapproves."

"And the king?"

The reply is a general laugh. Somebody has even the hardihood to whisper—

"Timide, imbecile, farouche,  
Jamais Louis n'avait dit mot;  
Pour tonner il ouvre la bouche.  
Est-ce un tyran? Non, c'est un sot."\*

The ladies are indignant. The young king is declared to be the handsomest youth in France. He has grown wonderfully during the last two years. His health is more robust, and he gives promise of being the handsomest man in his kingdom. "*L'œil du roi*"—a deep sapphire blue—is beginning to be a favorite color with the ladies, outrivalling *bleu de ciel*.

The portrait of Louis XV. by J. B. Vanloo, who painted Louis XIV. in his old age, is that of a noble-looking youth. The artist would willingly have painted a flattering picture, but found that the nearest approach he could make to a faithful copy of his model would be the nearest approach to physical beauty and

\*Timid, imbecile, and sullen,  
Louis has not spoken once.  
Now he lifts his voice in thunder.  
Is he a tyrant? No, a dunce.

the best proof of his skill. There is grace in the attitude of the youthful king, and an air of command. It is a well composed and very pleasant picture.

Though still diffident and silent among persons with whom he is little acquainted, the king's manners at this period are much improved. He is far less *brusque*; but, owing to his natural shyness, appears most to advantage in the small social circle of the Comtesse de Toulouse, where his extreme reserve disappears. It is at Rambouillet that he has acquired a certain courtly ease and chivalric bearing, which may well entitle him to the appellation "perfect gentleman," while they induce many sanguine persons to expect great things from him when a few more years shall have passed over his head.

What a pity that the bishop, who at any moment could dismiss M. le Duc from his post, should have allowed him and his mistress to send away the Infanta. She was a wonderfully observant little maiden, and her remarks were astonishingly shrewd for so young a child. She quite understood that she was to be a queen, and seemed sensible of the dignity of her position. Her *fiancé* very seldom took notice of her. Excessive timidity restrained him from evincing any great *empressement*, either towards her or ladies generally. He is, indeed, as yet, so little gallant, that he usually avoids *le beau sexe*. But when he becomes the object of attentions which fair dames already are anxious to pay him, he is remarkably polite and deferential.

Fleury's own indolence and love of ease have encouraged the similar tendencies of his pupil. It is to be feared, that until actually compelled by force of circumstances to use the great power he holds in his

hands, he will make no attempt to put it in action, either for his pupil's or the country's benefit. He is as fond of the Rambouillet circle as is the young king himself, whom he usually accompanies on his weekly visits to the château. The bishop is very socially inclined, and very witty, and the tone of the society he meets in the *salon* of the comtesse greatly pleases him. The Comte de Toulouse, who has seen some naval service, is of less studious habits, perhaps somewhat less pious, but decidedly of more genial temperament than his brother Du Maine.

The count has an only son, the Duc de Penthièvre, some years younger than the king. The domesticated, bourgeois-like life of the count and countess, and their attachment to each other, provoke the mirth and ridicule of society. Nevertheless, they are greatly and generally esteemed.

Fleury may have hoped that in their society the king would fall into similar tastes and habits. To a certain extent he has done so, and the dissolute young nobles now lying in wait in the hope of leading him into libertine courses, will probably find considerable difficulty in goading him into vice.

But, meanwhile, what has become of the marquise? She is a wonderful woman of business, the daughter of a financier, and on very intimate terms with one of the brothers Pâris-Duvernay, who assists her in governing the State. There are rumors that she has at last found a queen who has been accepted at a "privy council;" that Fleury has not objected, and that the king, finding he cannot escape matrimony, has quietly submitted to his fate.

The rumor proves to be fact. M. le Duc summons the *Grand' chambre*, and Louis XV. announces his

marriage with Marie Leczinska, daughter of Stanislaus Leczinski, ex-king of Poland.

What an outcry! what a general disappointment! "The daughter of a poor fugitive Polish noble, living in obscurity on a small pension from France, to be preferred to an Infanta of Spain!" Had she been of a more suitable age, it would have been some consolation. Surely, say the ladies, there are young princesses in Europe, of fifteen or sixteen, from amongst whom a more appropriate choice might have been made, than of this Polish lady in her twenty-third year, to share the throne of a boy-monarch not yet sixteen! "Madame de Prie never did look to consequences," it was remarked. But why should the king accept a bride of her selection? Is it really true then, as whispered about, "That this handsome boy is little better than a fool"?

And is Fleury also a fool? He had, it was supposed, but little ambition. He was seventy-two years of age, and not particularly active, though by no means infirm. But so far from being a fool, he was a man of talent and considerable culture, unless he may have been considered one for his persistent refusal of high ecclesiastical dignities, because of his unwillingness to take upon himself any fatiguing or responsible functions. His bishopric of Fréjus he resigned with as little delay as possible; much to the regret of his clergy. For by his economy, and conciliatory spirit, which—as remarked by Voltaire—were the predominant parts of his character, he had done much good in his diocese.

He gave, as a reason for resigning, that the state of his health (which was generally good) did not permit him to discharge satisfactorily the duties of his office.



The real motive appears to have been the distance of Fréjus (near Cannes) from the capital, and its unattractiveness, at that period, as a residence. "As soon as he saw his wife," he said, "he was disgusted with his marriage." In a letter to Cardinal Quirini, he signed himself, "Fleury, Bishop of Fréjus, by the wrath of God." His friend, Villeroi, suggested to Louis XIV. his appointment as preceptor to his youthful heir. Fleury, however, would have willingly declined it, but was not permitted.

The bishop seems to have been in some degree imbued with the pleasure-loving spirit of the age; though far too courtly to accept the philosophical ideas that were slowly gaining ground in society. His delight was in witty conversation, and piquant *badinage* with the ladies in the *salons*; but like Massillon, he declined discussion on theology. He was very fond of children; and at Rambouillet the little Infanta, who was much attached to him, used to sit on his knees while he told her fairy tales. Such was the man who for ten years had been preceptor to the king, who, on his part, confided in, and loved him both as a parent and a friend.

Fleury had, doubtless, his reasons for consenting to, or, rather, not opposing, the marriage of his royal pupil; therefore, the Polish princess became Queen of France, notwithstanding the generally expressed disapproval of the nation. Perhaps no one was surprised at this unlooked-for elevation so much as poor Stanislaus, her father. More than one version has been given of the manner in which he received the news of this freak of fortune in his favor—for Marie Leczinska was scarcely asked in marriage; Stanislaus was informed merely that she was accepted. He is said to have kept this fine piece of news a secret for some days; to have

revealed it cautiously, fearing its effect on his wife and daughter. Another, and more probable story, is that he no sooner knew it than he rushed into the room, and, with true Polish impetuosity, exclaimed, "On your knees! on your knees, and thank God"—himself setting the example. "Recalled to Poland?" they cried, excitedly. "No, no! far better—far better! Marie is to be Queen of France!"

She was married by proxy at Strasburg Cathedral on the 15th of August, 1725. The king's miniature, set in diamonds, had been presented to her; his beauty and manly appearance highly extolled, and a glowing account set before her of the pleasures awaiting her in France. But the intense misery she witnessed on her journey—petitions and appeals meeting her at every town and village, an inconceivable amount of wretchedness being then general in the provinces—so deeply affected her that she prayed on her arrival that, instead of expending money on *fêtes*, relief might be sent to the suffering people.

The public purse was very empty just then, and little money to be had for either *fêtes* or charity. The royal marriage took place on the 4th of September, and there was but scant rejoicing of any sort. The young bridegroom was immensely bored, and annoyed at the part assigned to him—so greatly did he dislike appearing prominently in public. The bride was far from being beautiful, but she was fresh and fair, and looked younger than she was. Her figure was graceful, and she was gentle and amiable. The bishop was kind, and appeared well satisfied (he was already aware that he had no feminine rival to fear), and Louis was therefore resigned. The ladies, of course, found much to criticise in their new queen, and laughed exceed-

ingly at her *bourgeois* French, which she had acquired from an illiterate waiting maid.

Madame de Prie became Dame du Palais de la Reine, and having succeeded in placing Marie Leczinska on the throne, was now looking forward to the speedy expulsion of the bishop and a long usurpation of power for herself and M. le Duc.

This marriage, at the time so generally disapproved, eventually added a fine province to the kingdom—the Duchy of Lorraine. Since the marriage of Anne of Brittany with Charles VIII., no previous queen had brought a dowry of equal value. A stipulated sum of money, only partly paid, or not paid at all, had been the usual marriage portion of the foreign princesses who became queens of France.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Sledging at Versailles.—La Dame du Palais.—The Queen's Secluded Life.—Piety of the Queen and King.—The Sound of the Hunting Horn.—The Good Old Days.—The Rain and the Sunshine.—Intrigues of Mdme. de Prie.—The Bishop Retires to Issy.—A Domestic Tempest.—A Scene at the Theatre.—Two Lettres-de-Cachet.—Pâris-Duvernay.—Fortune's Wheel Moves Round.—An Old Normandy Château.—Death of Madame de Prie.

THE winter of 1725-1726 was of extreme severity in France, and distress and suffering were frightful in the provinces. Many of the lesser nobility worked as hired laborers on lands they had once owned, and starvation and disease prevailed amongst the peasantry. The financial difficulties of the State were increasing, and the pressure of taxation was so great that murmuring was rife throughout the country, and it was found difficult to collect the imposts.

But neither the rigor of the season nor the penury of the exchequer was an evil that seemed to be felt at Versailles. There, the clear crisp air rang with merry laughter; with the jingling music of silver bells; with the sound of the swift pattering feet of small fleet horses, that appeared almost to fly with joyous parties of sledgers, over the ice-bound earth, the frozen lakes, and ornamental waters of the park. Polish fashions had become the rage; and the weather was well suited for the warmly-lined polonaise of velvet and fur, the furred casquette, and furred Polish

boots, which the queen had brought into vogue with the sledges.

Every courtier had his richly ornamented sledge. The king and queen, with the ladies and gentlemen of the court, amused themselves greatly, while the novelty of this exciting sport lasted. The queen first appeared in a sledge formed like a sea-shell. It was supported by Tritons, and rose-crowned cupids were grouped around it. Two fiery little steeds were attached by embroidered crimson leather harness, from which hung innumerable tinkling silver bells. The shell was lined with crimson velvet, and had cushions of the same. The king and queen, enveloped in rich sables, passed thus equipped through the park of Versailles and over its frozen waters. The courtiers were not slow to follow their example; but sledging did not survive its first season.

Among this gay throng, none was more brilliant than Madame de Prie, none more triumphant than M. le Duc; for on none did the queen smile more graciously. She regarded them as her own and her father's benefactors, as entitled to her warmest gratitude, and to such favor as her influence with the king might be able to obtain for them. The *dame du palais*, meanwhile, sought to strengthen this feeling, by her constant endeavor to please the royal lady she had raised to the throne; and, thus, insinuated herself into her confidence and secured her affection.

The king had now entered his seventeenth year, and had been six months married. Though evincing none of the enthusiasm of boyish love, he appeared, in his apathetic way, to be pleased with his pleasant-tempered, gentle, and unassuming bride.

Intellectually, Marie Leczinska was not highly

gifted, and her education had been but a scanty one; she spoke French fluently enough, but as an uneducated person. It was the despair of the academician, Moncrif, a great purist, who was her reader and instructor in the French language. She did her best to overcome the faults which, uncorrected, had grown into habits, but never quite succeeded. The king, who spoke, when he made up his mind to speak, with perfect correctness, and with a certain elegance of diction derived from his preceptor, was often amused by the expressions used by the queen, and the singular and unusual sense in which she employed many words. He, however, found her society sufficiently interesting to induce him to saunter away in her apartments a few of the many idle hours that hung so heavily on his hands. His visits to Rambouillet continued as usual, but it would seem that the queen did not accompany him thither. She lived in nearly as much seclusion as when dwelling in her obscure home at Weissenburg. No grand public *fêtes*, no court revels, had celebrated the marriage of Louis XV. Not many persons could then remember the public entry into Paris of Louis XIV. and his Spanish bride, and the festivities that followed. But tradition told of their splendor and exaggerated it; and the pleasure-loving Parisians, comparing the imaginary past with the reality of the present, believed that the old state of things must have been better than the new.

The queen had been reared in the most superstitious observance of the outward ceremonies of religion. Her great kindness of heart prompted her to indulgence and forbearance towards the fair but frail ladies of the French court. But had she possessed judgment and sufficient strength of mind to suppress the devotee

and, while conforming in some measure to circumstances, to play more conspicuously, and with some spirit, the part of queen ; her influence would probably have effected a reform in the manners of the court—when, as a penitent constantly on her *prie-dieu*, or shut up in her oratory, she inspired only sneering pity, or the profane laugh.

The king never omitted morning prayer, mass, and confession. There his religion ended. These duties performed he went to his gardening, or his turning. The latter was a new accomplishment, and he had succeeded in it remarkably well—making very presentable snuff-boxes from pieces of the roots of trees. But nowhere was he so free from *ennui* as at Rambouillet. A lively and youthful company was usually assembled there. Politics and affairs of State were subjects prohibited in the *salon* of the Countess. A word or look from the Count at once put an end to them, if, perchance, either designedly or otherwise, such topics seemed likely to be brought, or to glide, on the carpet.

But the chase in the forests of Rambouillet was Louis' favorite diversion. The sound of the hunting horn, the baying of the dogs, the impatience of his steed for the sport, all delighted him. They dispelled the languor and inertness that usually oppressed him, and which arose from a singularly indolent state of mind rendering him wholly incapable of sustaining an interest in any pursuit or amusement, unless excitement were kept up by continual movement and change. When weather permitted, the ladies joined these hunting parties, arrayed in blue and green riding-dresses, with lace cravats and ruffles, and hats *à la mousquetaire* or *à la Garde Française*.

At a certain shady spot in the forest, a substantial luncheon was always laid out, servants having been sent on before, with hampers of wine and provisions, to prepare this feast of all the good things in season. They were pleasant repasts. The exhilaration of the chase, the fresh, bracing air, the champagne, the banter, jokes, and gay talk, moved even the moody young king to brightness and laughter. Usually there was a dance on his return to the château; then *thé à l'Anglaise*; followed, by and by, by supper; for this was especially an eating and drinking age, as well as a singing and dancing one. Sometimes, after the dancing, just a little gambling took place; for Louis liked, and excelled in, both. And if it was a moonlight night, there was often a riding party home—well armed, of course; for there was a chance of encountering the famous highwayman Cartouche and his brigand-band; just as in the good old days in merry England.

But while young Louis XV. and his court were amusing themselves, distress in the country was increasing. The populace of Paris and its faubourgs were crying for bread, and every necessary of life had become scarcer and dearer. Prayers were daily offered up in the churches, and priestly processions paraded the streets. The silver shrine of Ste. Geneviève was, by order of the Parliament, carried through the city by barefooted priests intoning prayers, and followed by a bareheaded multitude, who invoked the intercession of the saints. Alas! neither prayers nor processions availed. No manna descended from heaven.

“What fools they are with their shrine!” exclaimed Madame de Prie. “They know not that it is I who make both the rain and the sunshine.” Forthwith the



order is issued to bring into the market the grain (obtained chiefly by exaction) which had been hoarded up from the moment that the probability of a scarcity was foreseen. It is offered now to the hungry people, at prices that put money into the purses of the minister and his mistress. This is the sunshine she sheds on the starving populace. Murmurs loud and deep reach the ears of Fleury, and petitions are addressed to the king through his hands. Madame de Prie, the bishop informs M. le Duc, must be dismissed from the court; her influence and interference in public affairs being prejudicial to the interests of the State.

The lady is highly incensed. "It is not she who will leave the court, but the bishop who shall receive his *congé*." The partisans of each do their best to eject the other. Madame de Prie and M. le Duc feel sure of the victory. Have they not the wealthy financier, Pâris-Duvernay, to support them; also the queen among their partisans? But Fleury is not to be drawn into a struggle for power with the mistress of M. le Duc, whom he has suffered for a time to be his *locum tenens*. He allows them to work out their own downfall; and it is not long delayed.

Yielding to the wishes of his preceptor that he would give some attention to the affairs of government, the king was accustomed to spend a short time in his apartment daily, engaged there with his first minister; the bishop being always present. When the public business was disposed of, M. le Duc withdrew, much to his annoyance; for the king remained to write, or to sign, under the bishop's direction, any documents relating to ecclesiastical affairs—the bishop having the independent charge of Church matters. It occurred to the duke and his mistress, that as the

king was more bored by these morning sittings than interested in them, he might be enticed to hold his conference with his minister in the apartment of the queen. Her majesty and her *dame du palais* could then amuse him; while the minister, occupying himself with the State's concerns, would make no demand on his sovereign's attention—the bishop, of course, being presumed to be absent. The queen consented; her friends assuring her that it was a most necessary and advisable course.

The king was indifferent to this change in the council chamber. But the bishop though neither informed of it nor invited to attend, yet did not fail to appear as usual, to assist his pupil with his advice. It was determined to exclude him. The duke's opinion was not asked on ecclesiastical affairs; the bishop's should not be accepted on secular ones. Accordingly, when next he presented himself, entrance to the queen's apartments was refused him. He withdrew, but said naught. His royal pupil noticed his absence, and, like the bishop, uttered no remark. He was always sparing of his words, and very rarely indeed carried away by feeling to forget the lessons of dissimulation which, as a necessary part of the education of kings, he had thoroughly mastered.

The sitting ended, the king seeks his preceptor. He is not to be found. He has left Versailles. "Finding that his majesty has no further occasion for his services or his advice, he has retired to Issy"—to that little country house that may be called the bishop's *boudoir*; for thither he always betakes himself when, not choosing to complain in words, it pleases him to assume the *boudeur*.

Now is Louis XV. roused, for the first time in his

life, to play the absolute monarch and the indignant husband. His deepest feelings are his great reverence and almost filial affection for bishop Fleury. He learns, on further enquiry, that his preceptor has been treated with disrespect; the attendants in the ante-room of the queen's apartments having denied him entrance. His anger is extreme. M. le Duc, whom he already disliked, strives vainly by excuses and apologies to appease him. With his own hand he has at once to sit down and write the king's commands to the bishop to return to Versailles; adding pressing entreaties from himself (for he foresees a storm gathering over his head) that he will make no delay. The queen is reproached with a vivacity that none hitherto had thought the king capable of, while she replies only by tears to her incensed young husband, whose displeasure is by no means subdued by her weeping.

This domestic tempest, originating in a palace intrigue, was discussed with much interest in courtly *salons*. It raised the vain hopes of would-be candidates for the post of *maitresse-en-titre*. It was the subject of conversation with all who dwelt at Versailles. "I remarked," says Voltaire, "that this domestic difference made a deeper impression on people's minds than the news of the war, which was afterwards so calamitous to France and to Europe. There was much agitation and questioning; vague and mistrustful replies. Some desired a revolution; others feared it; but all were alarmed."

Baron was to play Britannicus that same evening at the Palace Theatre. Voltaire was there when the king and queen arrived—an hour later, he says, than usual; the queen's eyes showing evident traces of re-

cent weeping. The popular repugnance to the king's marriage was not yet overcome, and when, in the course of the play, the words—

“*Que tardez-vous, seigneur, à la répudier ?*” \*

were pronounced by Narcissus, almost all who were present, we are told, turned their eyes on the queen, to observe the effect on her—a curiosity more indiscreet than malicious.

On the following day, Fleury returned to Versailles. He took no advantage of this opportunity of revenging himself on his opponent, and uttered no complaint whatever. He was, in fact, the head of the State, and with that he was content. Very soon after, however, the king when setting out for Rambouillet, where he had bought a small château or hunting seat, invited M. le Duc to pass the night there, and to hunt with him in the morning. He desired him to follow without delay, that he might not be kept waiting for supper. But no sooner had the king left Versailles than the Duc de Charost, ex-governor, and now Capitaine des Gardes, entered the apartment of M. le Duc, and, delivering a letter from the king, arrested him. Having received his sword, an officer of the guards was summoned to convey him to his place of exile, which in this case, was a very pleasant one—his father's residence, the Château de Chantilly—there to remain during his majesty's pleasure.

An order to retire to her estate of Courbe-Épine in Normandy, was at the same time delivered to Madame de Prie. Regarding this merely as a temporary

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\* Why do you hesitate, my lord, to discard her?

eclipse, she took her departure from Versailles in very good spirits. To bear her company during the supposed temporary retirement, Madame du Deffant accompanied her. Having quarrelled with both her husband and her *ami intime*, she chose to share her friend's exile until she could make up her mind to which of them she would be reconciled.

The wealthy Pâris-Duvernay, who had assisted the State in the arrangements consequent on the failure of the *Système* Law, was lodged in the Bastille for a time. The king also summoned a "Conseil extraordinaire," to inform his ministers that he, and not the financiers, would henceforth be the head of the State, and that business would be transacted in the apartments of M. de Fleury. That he, in fact, now sixteen-and-a-half years old, was about to reign, and his preceptor, at seventy-three, to govern.

The Duchesse d'Alincourt succeeded to the vacant post of *dame du Palais de la Reine*. The beautiful, and lately married, Duchesse de Boufflers, grand-daughter of Maréchal de Villeroi, and afterwards Duchesse de Luxembourg, was another of her ladies. The queen was informed of these changes, in a letter from the king, also that the orders of M. de Fleury were to be obeyed by her as implicitly as his own. She submitted, of course, and with good grace; abstaining entirely for the future from any attempt to interfere in affairs of State. Yet she appears to have been really displeased with a change which the nation, generally, greatly approved. Fleury would not accept the title of first minister. All power was, however, in his hands.

After the disgraceful administration of such men as the infamous Dubois; the incompetent M. le Duc, ruled by Madame de Prie and Duvernay, the French

people hailed with delight the accession to power of one in whose wisdom and justice they had confidence; and under whose auspices they looked for the return of order in the government and some respect for morality and decency of manners.

A cardinal's hat, which, owing to the intrigues of M. le Duc, had been for some time withheld, soon after made its appearance, and Fleury received it from the hands of the king. When the cardinal, wearing the insignia of his newly-conferred dignity, presented himself for the ceremony of thanking the king, the young monarch affectionately embraced him in the presence of the court, and, as Duclos remarks, openly expressed as much pleasure as the new cardinal probably inwardly felt.

And thus the tables were turned, and fortune's wheel moved round. A few persons went into exile, and many were recalled from it. The old Maréchal de Villeroi again visited Paris, to die in peace there in his eighty-eighth year. The legitimated princes were reinstated in all the privileges of which they had been deprived, except the right of succeeding to the throne, and the little Duchesse du Maine was made happy again by this triumph.

When Madame de Prie heard of these changes, and—which affected her most—that she was *dame du palais* no longer, she comprehended that henceforth the favor of the queen could avail her nothing, and that she would be received at Versailles no more. Intense grief, the madness of despair, took possession of her mind. Pilon, M. le Duc's physician, was sent for. He supposed her to be suffering from the complaint then in fashion with fine ladies—a nervous attack, vapors being superseded by nerves. He treated

her as a *malade imaginaire*; of disappointed ambition he knew naught. Nor could he have ministered to a mind diseased, had he even had the discernment to suspect the existence of that malady.

And so the once brilliant Madame de Prie—"a heavenly creature," according to d'Argenson; "wily as a serpent, beautiful, but not so harmless, as the dove," say others—pined away in her old Normandy château. And a living tomb, indeed, it must have been in those days—especially to one fond of splendor and power; one from whom France had accepted a queen of her choosing, and who for nearly three years had ruled the court of Versailles. After fifteen months of exile she died, at the age of twenty-nine. D'Argenson says, she announced, as a sort of prophecy, that her death would take place on a certain day, and very nearly at a certain hour named by her. Two days before the time stated, she secretly sent away her diamonds—which were of immense value—to some person at Rouen. When her confidential messenger returned, Madame de Prie was no more. She had taken poison of a violent kind, and her sufferings before death were excessive.

It is mentioned, as a reproach to her, that she left by will to M. le Duc nothing but a mediocre diamond, of about the value of five thousand *écus*.

The valuable casket of diamonds and jewels she secretly disposed of, was believed to have been destined for Pâris-Duvernay.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Fleury's Economy.—Mimi and Titite.—“Notre Toulouse.”—Mdlle. de Vichy-Chamroud.—A Singular Caprice.—The Epidemic—*Ennui*.—An Interesting Couple.—A Desolate Normandy Château.—The Ménagerie in Eclipse.—Emerging from the Cloud.—“Le Poème de la Ligue.”—A Pious Theft.—A Noble Chevalier.—“Rohan je suis.”—Homage to Madame du Defant.—“Adieu, la belle France.”

No festivities; no amusements. Dulness as depressing as in the gloomiest days of Louis XIV. has succeeded the dissipations of the regency. Those who shared in the pleasures of that corrupt society are in despair. They looked for gaiety, and a perpetual round of *fêtes* and diversions, on the young monarch's emancipation from the control of tutors and governors. But, from the time when roused, by M. le Duc's conduct, to that temporary display of energy and authority which led to so entire a change in the *personnel* of the government, he had fallen back to the monotonous and secluded mode of life most congenial to his apathetic temperament.

Fleury, secure against court intrigues, passed much of his time at Issy, cogitating in retirement on the best means of maintaining peace with neighboring kingdoms, and in devising schemes for economizing the revenue. Like the great Sully, whom in this he resembled, he was willing to put money into the treasury, but grumbled exceedingly at any undue demands on it. But while he reduced the customary



lavish expenditure of the king's household, and gained his docile pupil's willing assent to it, he also abolished the most oppressive of the taxes laid upon the people by his predecessor. This, on the one hand, displeased the courtiers; they would not recognize a necessary or wise economy, but parsimony only, in the diminished pomp and parade of the court. But, on the other, the timely relief afforded a suffering people by the removal of a portion of its burden of imposts, gained the confidence and goodwill of the nation. It gave renewed buoyancy to long-cherished hopes that with the reign of Louis XV. the despotism which marked the rule of the *Grand Monarque*, and the flagrant depravity that disgraced the regency, would give place to a more beneficent administration of public affairs, and a better example of social life. The prudent, moderate, and upright minister, on whom the young king's free choice had first fallen, was a guarantee of the monarch's desire for the welfare and prosperity of his people. The pleasure he evidently took in the society of his pious and amiable queen, surely also boded that the reign of domestic virtue in France had begun at Versailles, and in the palace where it had hitherto been a stranger. But such expectations were then the jest of the *salons*.

"We are to have a Mimi and Titite at Versailles, I hear." The lady who speaks, laughs in that sneering, cynical way so characteristic of the Marquise du Deffant.

It is she who throws out this remark for the amusement of the company assembled in the *salon* of her apartment in the Rue St. Dominique. And very amusing they find it; for Mimi and Titite are names which, in derision, the *beau monde* has given to the

Comte and Comtesse de Toulouse. They actually so far forget what is due to society as to appear in public together, unaccompanied by intimate friend of either sex. Often they may be met sauntering in the grounds of their château, just like any poor peasant couple on their estate; or, again, taking a quiet canter in the forest, with no other companion than the young Duc de Penthièvre. This son society has christened "notre Toulouse"—it being a *bourgeois* habit to speak of the heir of the house by the father's surname. M. et Mdme. Toitot-Leblond would call their eldest or only son "notre Toitot"—reversing the English mode, "our Jack" or "our Dick," instead of "our Jackson, or Dickson."

But as many laughs are raised just now, at the expense of the marquise, in other *salons*, as by the wit and the cynicism with which she attacks, in her own, the follies of others. She knows it, however, and is unaffected by it; for she knows that the dear friends who compose her society are as little inclined to spare her as she to spare them, when it is a question between a reputation and an epigram. Were it otherwise, what would become of wit? and hers is, *par excellence*, the *salon* of the wits, and of the new school of philosophy—though not arrived at the period of its greatest celebrity and influence. The marquise has scarcely yet taken up the sceptre of a queen of society, and constituted herself the protectress of philosophy and the philosophers.

At this time she is about thirty-one or thirty-two years of age, and, professedly, "the most *ennuyée* woman in France." A sceptic and cynic she has been from her childhood. She is of a noble but impoverished Burgundian family—De Vichy-Chamroud. Having

no fortune, her parents were glad to marry her to the Marquis du Deffant, many years her senior, and far from wealthy, but who is said to have been an estimable and honorable man, of whom there were few in those days. He was sincerely in love with her also, and possessed at least a position in society and a home to offer, such as a girl without a dowry could hardly hope for in France.

Emancipated by marriage from all inconvenient restraints, the marquise arrived in Paris, and figured prominently amongst the fair ladies of the regent's court. She was less remarkable for beauty than caustic wit—a quality which first attracted the regent, but, eventually, an injudicious application of it was the means of her losing his favor. The poor marquis, who appears to have been as humble and obedient a husband as any lady could desire, was the passive victim of his young wife's caprice, and, even worse than caprice, bad temper and discontent. She entirely discarded him at last—preferring the exclusive society of her *ami intime*.

She had already begun to play the part of an *ennuyée*, therefore could not long support the society of her friend: and as she at that time succeeded to an annuity of four thousand *écus*, she sought a reconciliation with the marquis, and proposed, as advantageous to both, that they should unite their incomes, and, giving up friendship, live together in *bourgeois* fashion. The marquis was delighted with the idea, and acceded without hesitation to her proposal. Her friends, Mmes. de Parabère, Aissé, de Prie, de Tencin, and their circle generally, were much amused at the singularity of this caprice. Their laughter changed not her purpose; nor was she moved from it by a torrent of reproaches from

her forsaken *cicisbeo*. This innovation—the *ami intime*, or domestic lover, being a recognized institution—was a really bold step, which might have brought about the abolition of the nuisance of intimate friends generally, but for that terrible malady—*ennui*. For the space of two months all went on smoothly, even happily, as far as the marquis was concerned. Her family was also much pleased with the change.

But, alas! “All that is bright must fade.” The lady’s resolve to share her husband’s home faded away under the influence of a returning fit of *ennui*. She declared she could endure his presence no longer, and hastened away, lest *ennui* should give place to disgust. *Ennui* was an epidemic as prevalent then, it would seem, as vapors or nerves. The king was affected by it, and, more or less, society generally. The remedy, with the king, was alternate seclusion and the Rambouillet chase; with society, it was the *salon*, though not always an effective one.

The separate income of the marquise was hardly equal to the expense of setting up a *salon*—a *salon* that should compete with that of Madame de Tencin or of Madame de Lambert—who, in spite of her eighty-two years, still received weekly, and gave her famous Thursday dinners.

Literature and philosophy scarcely cared to show themselves where there was no prospect of dinner or supper. But where the good things of life were liberally provided, it mattered not at all to which section of society the lady who did the honors belonged. What suppers and dinners were given by the popular singers and actresses! Mdlle. Le Couvreur, for instance; the singers Mdlle. Lemaure and Madame Pellissier—between whom great rivalry existed, the world

being undecided to which lady to award the palm of *prima donna*. Again, Mdlle. Antier, who, as Ceres, had won, by the charm of her singing, the heart, as it was called, of the Vicomte Lamothe-Houdancourt, not only gave suppers herself, but, with her lover, was invited to those of ladies of high rank. Society, we learn, was greatly edified by the "mutual passion" of this interesting couple. The enthusiasm of the gentleman, the smiling tenderness of the lady—"Ah! it was really delightful to see." "Alas! the pity on't"—it did not last long.

If society smiled on this interesting pair of lovers, it looked severely on Madame du Deffant. The outraged feelings of the intimate friend she had forsaken for her husband, commanded, as naturally they would, general sympathy. Now, indeed, he had his revenge, and laughed as heartily at the marquis as at the friendless marquise. It was then that the order to retire to her estates was received by Madame de Prie. The marquise, availing herself of this circumstance, thought it would be well, until society had had its laugh out, to go into exile also. *Ennuyée* in Paris, she yet failed to reflect what she would be at Courbe-Épine—her sole companion a disappointed, desponding *intrigante*. Naturally, she found life intolerable in that desolate Normandy château. Her fit of *ennui* was more real than any she had known before. She therefore determined to return; leaving her dear friend to loneliness, grief and despair, which, as we know, death by her own hand, soon after put an end to.

On returning to Paris, the marquise, to her surprise, received a visit from the Bishop of Clermont. Her relative, the Duchesse de Charost, believing that scepticism and irreligion, more than *ennui*, were the cause

of her unsettled frame of mind and general discontent, fancied that Massillon might be able to reason her into a better state of feeling. Madame du Deffant, speaking of their interview, says, "My understanding was abashed before the greatness of his intellect; yet I submitted not to the force of his reasoning, but to the importance of the reasoner."

The *salon* of Madame de Tencin was at that time suffering a partial eclipse; it might have proved a total one, but for the money expended in bribes, and the influence of the archbishop, her brother. The numerous "animals" who composed her ménagerie, also exerted themselves to help her out of her trouble, being unwilling to lose their mistress and the good cheer with which she provided them. Yet her position, for awhile, was regarded as a perilous one.

M. La Fresnaye, Conseiller au Grand Conseil, after heavy losses at the gambling table, shot himself in the *boudoir* of Madame de Tencin. The ball passed through his heart, and he died on the instant. The President and Procureur were sent for, and the Conseiller was buried, at Madame de Tencin's request, secretly, and in the night. This strange story was told about Paris the next day, and with many particulars so unfavorable to the Canoness that she was arrested, and conveyed to the Châtelet, and thence to the Bastille. A paper was found in the desk of La Fresnaye, "to be opened only after his death, and in the presence of his creditors." Instead of an arrangement respecting his affairs, which it was supposed to contain, it was a statement that he was ruined by the arts and deceptions of Madame de Tencin, and that if he died a violent death it was she who should be accused of it. She was one of those monsters, he

said, who ought to be expelled the kingdom; being capable of the vilest deeds.

Much more followed, but the paper was condemned as malicious and untrue, and after two months' detention she was released from confinement, secure from any renewal of the accusations against her. Anxiety had told on her health. She was advised, therefore, on her liberation immediately to set out for her estates in Dauphiné, to recruit both health and spirits, before reappearing to shine once more as a bright particular star amongst her coterie of wits and philosophic animals.

La belle marquise, meanwhile, established herself in more unpretending style than formerly, in her hôtel in the Rue Ste. Anne. She gave her circle of learned wits and celebrities "*thé à l'Anglaise.*" Her suppers or dinners were never far-famed, but she was recognized as "a prodigy of wit," whose sentiments favored the advance of the "great cause." Montesquieu, when in Paris during the vacation of the parliament of Bordeaux, of which he was president, was one of the most constant frequenters of her *salon*. The first success of his "*Esprit des Lois*" was due to her exertions in distributing copies, and to her professed admiration of the work as a most brilliant and remarkable production of a man of genius. Such, indeed, was the usual mode of launching a book. The Parisian booksellers' trade was not then a flourishing one, so difficult was it to obtain permission to publish "*Avec privilege du roi.*"

The books most in request were not those openly exposed for sale on the steps of the Sainte Chapelle, but those which glided furtively into France from the presses of Amsterdam or Brussels. Voltaire was re-

fused permission to print his "Henriade." He had desired to dedicate it to the king, and it was presented by Richelieu. Fleury declined to receive it; yet it was not condemned. A few copies, however, printed elsewhere, were distributed in Paris amongst private friends. This coming to the knowledge of some of the clergy, application was made for authority to seize them, with a view of suppressing the work entirely by means of ecclesiastical censure. It was then entitled "Le Poème de la Ligue," and was said to contain passages favoring the errors of the "semi-Pelagians." But it was its advocacy of toleration, and especially the appreciative lines on Coligny,\* that offended the clergy; in whom, with some honorable exceptions, a persecuting spirit seemed to be thought an atonement for their generally dissolute lives.

The "Henriade" was published by subscription in London, and dedicated to the Queen. Voltaire's friend, Thiriot, received subscriptions for the work in Paris, and payment for between twenty and thirty copies having been made, he put the amount aside for transmission to England. Some thief, however, entered his apartment while he was absent at high mass on Whit-Sunday morning, and stole the money. (The clergy should have caught this thief and have canonized him.) The loss fell wholly on Voltaire; the copies subscribed for being delivered, though the subscrip-

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\* To speak approvingly of Coligny, Du Plessis-Mornay, and other Protestant leaders, was, in the estimation of the court, to disseminate sedition; in that of the clergy, to propagate heresy. "What noble citizens Coligny, La Noue, Du Plessis-Mornay, D'Aubigné even, if they had not been heretics!" exclaims a recent bigoted French writer, in a sort of apology for the persecuting spirit of the sixteenth century.



tion had vanished. Yet the London edition of the "Henriade" was a most successful and profitable one.

Montesquieu visited England at about the same time as Voltaire. The latter had left France on being released from the Bastille, where he had been imprisoned for six months for sending a challenge to the Chevalier de Rohan. This magnificent personage, possessing no merit of his own, plumed himself greatly on his noble birth, and the merits of his ancestors. He disapproved, it appears, of the distinction with which Voltaire was received in the society of the men of rank. He took, therefore, the first opportunity that offered (it was at a *réunion* at the *hôtel* of the Duc de Richelieu) of showing his contempt for the plebeian poet, by addressing him in a manner his lackey would almost have resented. Voltaire replied in a politely veiled sarcasm which amused all present, except the Chevalier. He was highly incensed, but not being so *spirituel* as the poet he despised, the witty sally was received with disdainful silence. The noble Chevalier, however, revenged himself by ordering his servants, a day or two after, to insult Voltaire when leaving the *hôtel* of the Duc de Sully, with whom he had been dining.

The two lackeys thrust themselves against him, elbowed him roughly, and nearly threw him down stairs; at the same time greatly enjoying his discomfiture, and treating it as an excellent joke. The Duke, his host, expressed his regret, but took no further notice of the matter. The Chevalier was a scion of the great Rohan family. He bore on his shield, "*Rohan je suis.*" That repelled all who would dare to attack him. The tribunals, too, were not for such as he. No magistrate would presume to listen to an ac-

cusation against him, much less to punish so high and mighty a delinquent. But Voltaire, stung to the quick by the unprovoked insult he had received, after taking some lessons in the use of the sword, challenged the Chevalier. The reply was a *lettre-de-cachet*, and an apartment in the Bastille.

The Duc de Richelieu, some few months after, was about to leave Paris in very grand state, as Ambassador Extraordinary to the Court of Vienna. He and Voltaire were on intimate terms; and as the Duke was at that time in favor at Versailles, and had obtained in his appointment to this embassy the wish of his heart, and facility for equipping himself with due splendor—by means of *un arrêt de surséance* to shield him from his creditors, he resolved, before leaving, to do his poet friend a good turn, if possible, by securing his speedy release. He spoke to the king; also to the queen, who had but recently granted a pension of fifteen hundred francs to Voltaire from her own private purse. They referred him to Fleury, who, the affair being explained to him, granted the duke's request immediately.

Naturally Voltaire's six months' incarceration had given added keenness to his cynicism, rather than blunted its sting. His admiration of French institutions had at the same time diminished. He determined therefore to bid adieu for a time to his friends of the *salons*, to the budding philosophers, and to the many fair dames he adored. To none did he pay greater homage than to Madame du Deffant. The reign of the "sublime Emilie" had not then begun, and the free-thinking marquise commanded his highest admiration. He took every opportunity of speaking of her, of vaunting her understanding, of flatter-

ing her imagination, and of placing her on the very best terms with herself—though her excessive egoism had already rendered any efforts of that sort superfluous. He praised her wit, and exaggerated excessively the merits of those bagatelles, *vers de société*, of which so plentiful a crop was then produced—not only in the *salon* of the marquise, but in every other *salon* of that day.

Of the poetic trifles of Madame du Deffant, Voltaire wrote:—

" De qui sont ils ces vers heureux,  
Légers, faciles, gracieux ?  
Ils ont, comme vous, l'art de plaire;  
Du Deffant, vous êtes la mère  
De ces enfants ingénieux." \*

But Voltaire did not linger long in Paris. Having bent the knee before the brilliant marquise and the fair Adrienne Le Couvreur, and embraced those friends he called his "dear angels"—the d'Argental family—he left *la belle* France, crossed the Channel, and for the next three years took up his abode in England.

\* Whose are these easy, graceful lines ?  
They have, like you, the art of pleasing.  
You, Du Deffant, are the happy mother  
Of these brilliant children.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Prayers for a Dauphin.—The Prayer is granted.—Louis XV. a Model Husband.—Baron's Final Retirement.—Death of Adrienne Le Couvreur.—Jealous Rivals.—Generosity of Adrienne.—Burial of Mdlle. Le Couvreur.—Voltaire's Lines on Adrienne.—Zaïre, ou Les Enfants Trouvés.—Grandval the Actor.—The Prime Donne.—Rameau.—The Abbé Pelligem.—A Musical Cabal.—Voltaire et les Danseuses.—The Apotheosis of Hercules.—Boucher's Painting Room.

GREAT was the disappointment of the French people when, in August, 1727, it was announced that twin daughters were born at Versailles—*Madame première, et Madame deuxième*. Greater still was the outcry in the following year, when *Madame troisième* made her appearance. The queen grieved and wept. She felt that she had not done her duty to the nation. But the king consoled her, and received the third little princess, we are told, "with a good grace, and courageously;" yet he, too, would have given a much warmer welcome to a son.

However, it was thought advisable to petition heaven for a dauphin; and, accordingly, the Archbishop of Paris ordered public prayer to be made throughout the kingdom for an heir to the throne. The king and queen also went in state to Paris to ask the intercession of Ste. Geneviève. Marie Leczinska had been three years married, but this was her first visit to the capital. The Parisian world was therefore anxious to see its queen, and though not too well

satisfied with her, gave her a cordial reception that proved cheering to her spirits. Barbier describes her as *petite*, slight in figure, and rather thin. Other accounts speak of her as above the middle height, and of graceful and dignified carriage; while one of her ladies of the palace says, rather contemptuously, "She is a good enough sort of a Pole, but a little *bourgeoise* and very devout." All, however, are agreed that she had no claim to beauty, though her face was not unpleasing, owing to its amiable and gentle expression.

She wore, we learn, on this occasion, a pale pink robe of state, with scalloped trimmings, but without ornament of gold or silver. The "Sancy" glittered in her hair; the twelve Mazarin diamonds, on her arm, set as a bracelet, and, besides, the whole of the crown jewels apparently—with the exception of the "Regent," which the king wore in his hat—were arranged as stomacher, necklace, or other ornament for her dress or hair.

Thus brilliantly arrayed, and accompanied by the ladies and gentlemen of their household in full court dress and in the royal state carriages, their majesties traversed Paris. The glittering show delighted the people, who rarely witnessed the pomp and display of the court—royal visits to Paris being few and far between. Ste. Geneviève would seem to have lent a favorable ear to the prayers of the royal suppliants and their faithful lieges; for on the 4th of September—their majesties' wedding day—1729, the nation was gladdened by the news of the birth of a dauphin.

Few public rejoicings, however, took place. The king gave no signal, and the nation was as indolent and inert on the subject as their sovereign himself. It was desirable that there should be an heir to the

throne. He was born. King and people were satisfied; there was an end of it; and the cardinal was far too anxious to restore order in the financial system to countenance, much less to propose, expenditure on *fêtes*. Unlike Louis XIV. in his youth, Louis XV. shunned gaiety, and communicated his own gloomy apathy to the court. Nothing annoyed or bored him so much as having to take any part in a public ceremony or *fête*. He would scarcely look at a lady, and at that time was quite a model husband. "The queen," he said, "was prettier than the handsomest ladies at court." But his constancy to the wife who had been chosen for him was owing more to indifference than admiration. With idleness and quietude he was then perfectly content, and, had he not been interfered with by the more actively evil-minded young men of his court, he would have gone on to the end of his career, simply, *un roi fainéant*, instead of being that and much more.

But, while the news from Versailles was received with a languid satisfaction by the world of Paris, another and widely different announcement excited very lively regret among the society of the capital. It was that of the final performances of Michel Baron, and his retirement from the stage.

Owing to the greater popularity of operatic performances, both at the Academy of Music and Opéra Comique, the Théâtre Français had received but indifferent support until the reappearance of Baron. His and Mdlle. Le Couvreur's interpretation of the principal *rôles* in the plays of Corneille and Racine, and the tragedies of Voltaire and La Motte, had revived the vogue of the Théâtre; which was now a well-frequented and flourishing establishment. As

Baron still trod the stage with a firm, elastic step, his form erect, his bearing noble, the fire of his eye undimmed, and his finely-modulated voice yet sonorous, flexible, and unflinching, his intention to retire caused as much surprise as when, ten years before, his reappearance was announced.

Strength of will, a resolve not to succumb to the infirmities of age, bore him up through his part—"and," says an eye-witness, "it was difficult not to yield to the illusion that he was actually the person he represented." But, the play ended, it was evident that, if he had succeeded for awhile in overcoming physical weakness, he had suffered much in the struggle. He accepted, therefore, the warnings of nature, and retired with his great reputation undiminished. His acting gave a temporary revival of public favor even to the plays of Pradon. In "Regulus," a very poor tragedy, he made a deep impression on his audience. One of his last appearances was as Ladislaus, in Rotrou's play of "Vencislaus." Though unaccustomed to betray any emotion, save that which the character he represented required, on that occasion, he is said to have hesitated for a moment, as if to overcome personal feeling—after repeating the words, "So near the grave, whither I am going."

The farewell to Baron was an ovation on the part of the public. He died in the following year; supposed to be not less than seventy-seven or eight. Under his portrait J. B. Rousseau wrote:—

"Du vrai, du pathétique, il a fixé le ton,  
De son art enchanteur l'illusion divine  
Prêtait un nouveau lustre aux beautés de Racine  
Un voile aux défauts de Pradon." \*

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\* He struck the key-note of pathos and truth. The divine il-

In the same year that the death of Baron occurred, the Comédie Française lost another of its popular favorites—Adrienne Le Couvreur. It was then customary to attribute all deaths of which the exact cause was not known, to poison. The jealousy of the Duchesse de Bouillon was said to have occasioned Adrienne's, by means of poisoned pastilles, administered to her by a young abbé. It is a story unworthy of credit; though probably Scribe's play may have contributed to gain credence for it. The Comte Maurice de Saxe was the fickle lover of both those ladies. But it does not appear that the duchess—who, like the actress, had a large circle of *amis intimes*—was so jealous of wholly monopolizing the attentions of that butterfly personage as to poison a former mistress: or, that the actress was so piqued by their transfer to another, that, forgetting what was due to the audience, she addressed, from the stage, the pointed speeches of Phédre—a part she was playing—to the duchess in her box, and was rewarded for this impertinence and bad taste by the plaudits of the whole house. Mdlle. Sauvré, on some other occasion, is said to have addressed a favored rival from the stage; but the fickle lover was not Maurice de Saxe, and the audience was the reverse of sympathetic.

Voltaire, one of the most enthusiastic of Mdlle. Le Couvreur's host of admirers, repudiated the idea of poison, and attributed her death to a violent attack of dysentery. She took no care of her health, was near forty years of age, and had led a life in accordance with the licentiousness of the period; which was not

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lusion of his enchanting art gave new lustre to the beauties of Racine, and veiled the faults of Pradon.



only little severe towards an actress, necessarily exposed to very great temptations; but could also regard with complacency the open depravity of such great ladies as the Duchesse de Bouffleurs, granddaughter of the Maréchal de Villeroi. Voltaire himself introduced to Adrienne a friend who became a rival—his dear angel, the Comte d'Argental—who would have married the fascinating actress; but she declined his suit, to the great relief of his family.

She doubtless felt more than a passing regard for the faithless Maurice de Saxe. To enable him to equip his soldiers when he proposed to recover the principality of Courland—to the sovereignty of which he had been elected, but was excluded from it by Russia,—Adrienne, who was generous to prodigality, supplied him with the sum of forty thousand francs, the product of the sale of her jewels. Very sincere, too, was her regret when, not long before her death, she heard that he had gone to a ruinous expense and incurred debts in the construction of a "*galère*," which, propelled by mechanism, and probably steam, was to make the voyage up the Seine, from Rouen to Paris, in twenty-four hours. He had obtained, on the certificates of two men of science, testifying to the utility of this project, a privilege or patent from the king. But in spite of the efforts of the best scientific skill and labor then obtainable, he never succeeded in getting the apparatus into working order. "*Mais, que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?*" exclaimed Adrienne when she heard of his scheme and its failure.

Priestly aid was not sought for Mdle. Le Couvreur until it was too late to confess; to declare that she renounced her profession, and to receive absolution. Christian burial was therefore refused, though the

large sum of a hundred thousand francs, which she charitably left to the poor, was not rejected by the Church; as consistently it should have been, as the gift of one excommunicated. Two street porters were employed to carry her body, in the night, to the corner of the Rue de Bourgogne, and to bury her there. Baron had dreaded a like indignity, but provided against it by timely arrangements with the Church. Yet he invariably asserted that he had never felt the smallest scruple to declaiming before the public the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the genius of the great French authors; and that nothing, he conceived, could be more irrelevant than to attach shame and disgrace to the reciting of a work which it was deemed glorious to have composed.

“I have seen,” says Collé, in his memoirs, “Baron, Le Couvreur, and Les Quinault, and they gave me the idea of perfection—and especially Baron; though, when I saw him, he could not have been less than seventy-three or seventy-five years of age.”

Thus passed away, almost at the same time, these two great stars of the Théâtre Français. The indignant lines written by Voltaire on the ignominy cast on the great French actress by the countenance of the priesthood to such a burial as hers, were the cause of his again being obliged to leave Paris. He retired to Normandy where he wrote “Zaïre.” The performance of the graceful Mdlle. Gaussin in the principal part quickly consoled him for the loss of Adrienne, who, as some persons thought, was excelled by her successor; art—as was the case with Baron—intelligently subdued, aiding and heightening the effect of her natural gifts. Of Adrienne, Voltaire wrote, “Nature had taught her, and Cupid finished her edu-

cation." Voltaire's play of "Zaïre," achieved an immense success, and many were the heart-burnings it caused amongst would-be rivals. To cast ridicule upon it in the *salons*, they gave it a new title, "La pièce des enfants trouvés." This raised many a laugh, but did not diminish the success of the play. Writing tragedies and comedies—which sometimes were read in the *salons*, but rarely produced on the stage—was as much a mania at that period, as the writing of novels in the present day.

After the retirement of Baron and the death of Mlle. Le Couvreur, the popularity of the Comédie Française seems to have declined for awhile. Yet it maintained, undiminished, its reputation as the first theatre in Europe; the dramatic ability of the several members of its company forming, as was generally acknowledged, an assemblage of talent unrivalled elsewhere. Yearly, the old *répertoire* was gone through, Rotrou, Corneille, Molière, Racine, Pradon, and Crébillon's early tragedies. New productions were less generally approved by the constant *habitues* of the theatre. The success of a new play might be great, yet it would be allowed only a limited number of representations.

There were, it appears, fewer successful comedies than tragedies, yet Grandval, who contributed so much to make the fame of "Le Glorieux" was then in high repute both as an actor and as "the glass of fashion." Great nobles studied his looks, his gestures, his manner of carrying his cane, of presenting his snuff-box, of taking off his hat; his grandly deferential air when conversing with ladies; his entries and exits, and the graceful *tournure* of the whaleboned skirts of his coat. Happy, indeed, were many of the

*jeunesse dorée* if, after diligent practice, they went forth from their cabinets Grandvals; but in their own opinion, Grandvals improved: so far surpassing their model, that they who studied most to catch the airs and graces of the actor, were fond of jesting in the *salons* on Grandval's amusing assumption of the manners of the fashionable world.

But the most powerful counter-attraction to the Théâtre Français was at all times the opera. At this period disputes ran so high respecting the pre-eminence in talent and beauty of the three *prime donne*, that swords were drawn and blood was shed. Happily it flowed not from fatal wounds, but from slight scratches and gashes, which the ladies' admirers respectively felt compelled, in honor, to give and receive whenever a word in disparagement of the object of his adoration was uttered in his presence. It was often elegantly said of Mdlle. Lemaure, that she was "as stupid as a post." She had a fine voice, but no musical culture, and little natural intelligence. But she had a pretty face, and was always splendidly dressed.

They were advantages that counted for much, for musical taste was but little developed; Lulli most frequently occupied the scene, and the audience was familiar to weariness with the chief of his productions. Madame Pellissier was an *artiste* of greater pretensions, whose merits were recognized by the more critical part of her hearers. Little Mdlle. Antier was both clever and pretty, and sang, it was said, with the tenderness of the dove; which, reminding one of a monotonous cooing, does not seem very high praise. Of the male singers, Thévenard, Chassé, and Murane were most in favor. Murane was subject to

frequent fits of religious melancholy, and inclined to migrate from the operatic stage to the cloister. It is probable that Francine, Lulli's son-in-law, who so long had the direction of the opera of the Academy, may have been the cause of Lulli's music being for so many years almost exclusively given there.

When Destouches, the musician, in 1724 succeeded Francine in the management of the opera, he brought forward his own musical compositions, which were rather below than above mediocrity. *Compra*, a better musician but inferior composer, was not more successful. Yet the talented Rameau, whose musical gifts had been evident from childhood; who had studied his art in Italy, had published a treatise on harmony, studies in counterpoint, and other theoretical works, with some successful sonatas for the harpsichord, on which he was a skilful performer, could scarcely obtain by teaching, in Paris, the bare means of subsistence.

He had sought the appointment of organist at one of the churches of Paris, but had failed to obtain it, owing to the opposition he had met with from the paltry intrigues of jealous mediocrity. Disgusted and disheartened, and suffering from distress, he was glad to accept the place of organist of the Cathedral of Clermont, in Auvergne; his hopes of rising to distinction in the musical world being thus long-deferred, and, at first, apparently at an end.

In 1723, Michel Montéclair, first *contrebasse* of the Orchestra of the Academy of Music, produced an opera, "*Jephthé*," which the director accepted, and which was well received by the public. Rameau, who was present at its first representation, was moved by the applause bestowed on it, to abandon his theo-

retical writings for the composition of operatic music. Yet there seems to have existed somewhere a persistent determination to thwart his hopes. To get a hearing, he wrote the music for Piron's piece, "La Rose," which was produced at the Théâtre de la Foire of St. Germain, the composer's name being withheld. It was, however, very successful, and the airs became popular.

The Abbé Pelligem, a writer of canticles—which it was his singular custom to adapt to airs of the Pont-Neuf, or tunes of the satirical, often ribald, songs of the people—had written a dramatic poem entitled "Hippolyte et Anne." Persuaded by M<sup>de</sup>. de la Poplinière,—wife of the wealthy fermier-général, and daughter of Daucour, of the Théâtre Français—who had been a pupil of Rameau, the Abbé entrusted his poem to the poor organist to set to music. This was quickly done, and the piece produced. A cabal, meanwhile, was got up. Enthusiastic Lullists were joined by some of the singers, and it was determined that Rameau's music should not be heard, but be put down at once.

The house was well filled; all, however, were not opponents. Those who went, intending to hear, appear to have been as numerous as those who had determined that nothing should be heard. Numerous interruptions occurred. A large number of the rioters were ejected, and notwithstanding the great disadvantages of so tumultuous a first representation, enough was heard by competent connoisseurs to convince them that France possessed a musician of genius. That, in fact, a greater than Lulli was there. Laborde, writing of him says, "Music owes to Rameau as much as science does to Newton." But Rameau was fifty years

of age before his talent obtained recognition, and even then it was but grudgingly granted—the Lullist and Ramist contest being kept up for some time. His opera of *Castor and Pollux* completed his triumph. The world then ran after him, lauded him as before it had dispraised him, and librettists innumerable besieged him with offers of collaboration.

Another great attraction at the opera was the *ballet*. Nicolet, and Mdles. Sallé and Camargo were the principal dancers, and the *corps-de-ballet*, generally, was very efficient.

“Oh! Camargo, que vous êtes brillante!

Mais, que Sallé est beaucoup plus ravissante,”\*

wrote Voltaire, uncertain to which of these divinities, “filles de Terpsichore et l'Amour,” the greater homage was due.

There is a very graceful picture by Lancret, the pupil and imitator of Watteau, of Mdle. Sallé as a wood nymph.

“Ses pas sont mesurés par les grâces,

Et composés par les amours,” †

again writes the enraptured Voltaire. But when Mdle. Camargo, whose dancing is described as having the appearance of flying, once more, fluttering her gauzy wings, dazzles him by her rapid flight across the stage, he writes—

“Camargo vole en ces beaux lieux

On voit sans toi languir nos yeux,

\* Oh! Camargo, how brilliant you are!

But how much more charming Sallé.

† Her steps were devised by Cupid, and measured by the graces.

De tes pas la vivacité,  
 Est l'image de la volupté;  
 Pour te suivre les jeux, les ris,  
 Ont quitté la cour de Cypris." \*

The scenery, dresses, and decorations were splendid. The opera, indeed, never succeeded in paying its expenses, so costly were its scenic effects and general arrangements. The State had continually to release the directors from debt. Yet the opera was greatly patronized, and the salaries of the principal singers and dancers were small, compared with those received by the great *artistes* of the present day. The great outlay was in stage decorations and dress.

The famous Boucher now painted the scenery. He was a pupil of Lemoine, the painter of the "Apotheosis of Hercules," on the ceiling of the grand salon of Versailles. The work occupied him four years, but, as he fancied that it did not meet with due appreciation from the king and the cardinal, the disappointment preyed on his mind, and in a moment of despair he committed suicide. Boucher did not equal his master, and was inferior to Watteau, whom he imitated. He had but lately returned from Italy, where he had joined Carle Vanloo. Italy, however, was not to his taste. He loved Paris and the libertine life he led there. He cared not for the old masters, and preferred to paint *figurantes* to saints. Yet, in purely decorative art, Boucher was unrivalled.

Soon after his return to France, he fell in love at

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\* All eyes follow thy rapid flight.  
 'Tis the image of delight.  
 Leaving Cypris, all press after  
 Thy delicious jests and laughter.



first sight with a young girl, who, with her beauty and a large basket of cherries, made a very pretty picture, as she sat selling her fruit at the corner of a street in Paris. This young girl became his mistress, but soon after died, when Boucher, to dispel his deep grief, plunged into a course of reckless dissipation. The grief was quickly dispelled, it appears, as he shortly after married, but the dissipation continued. In spite of his meretricious style, and the adverse criticism he met with, Boucher became the fashion, and painted fair dames of every degree, and every shade of philosophy. His painting room was a perfumed boudoir, draped with plaited pink silk and curtained and festooned with pale blue satin.

## CHAPTER XX.

A Drawing-Room Picture.—The Young Comte de Mirabeau.—Rival Gambling Salons.—The Foundling, d'Alembert.—The Irrepressible Bull.—Mdlle. Daucour.—The Rich Fermier-Général.—The Hôtel La Poplinière.—A Scene of Enchantment.—A French Mephistopheles.—The Banished Wife.—The Infamous de Richelieu.

“WHAT a commotion at the Français last night !” murmurs a lady, as with an indolent air she reclines on the cushions of a crimson brocaded and gold-laced sofa in the *salon* of Mdme. de Tencin. She has scarcely the air of a Frenchwoman. Her eyes are large, dark, and lustrous. She wears no rouge, and the clear, pale *bistre* tint of her complexion, the strongly marked eyebrows, and masses of dark hair coiled round her head, in a coronet, and guiltless of powder, seem to denote an Oriental origin. Her dress is of rich material, and, on the whole, is of the fashion of the day. Yet it so far differs in many of its details from the prevailing taste, as to appear an adaptation of *la mode* to the style and fancy of the wearer, more than a full concession to fashion's decrees.

A little negro, fancifully attired, stands near the end of the sofa, fluttering a large bunch of marabout plumes. Most ladies at this period had an attendant negro boy, but rarely did he appear so harmonious an accessory as in the very pretty picture formed by this lady and her slave.

“And what was the cause of the commotion, *ma*

*chère!*" inquires Madame de Tencin, as she glances at two young men in earnest conversation at the further end of the *salon*, and who both are her *protégés*—one, indeed, is her reputed son—they are the younger Helvetius and d'Alembert.

"All the news and *on-dits* of the day," she continues, "reach you, *ma belle Haidée*, sooner even than Madame du Deffant, though Pont de Veyle carries his daily budget to her. But then you see him first, and you have d'Argental's report besides."

"I heard this from the Chevalier," replies the lady. "He was at the Français when a party of young officers entered and called loudly for one of Molière's plays, 'Le Tartuffe,' I think, instead of 'Britannicus,' the piece announced. To not a word of the latter would they listen; the actors were hissed whenever they attempted to speak. The disturbance at last became so general, that the police with difficulty ejected the rioters and some of the audience who had joined them. Foremost among them was the dissipated young Comte de Mirabeau,\* who has fallen desperately in love with Mdle. d'Angeville, and vows he will marry her in spite of his family."

"Young Mirabeau marry d'Angeville!" exclaimed Helvetius, advancing towards the ladies. "He could as easily persuade the old Marquis himself to consent, as prevail on her to do so. She read his tender *billets-doux* last night for the amusement of the company at supper at La Quinault's. Mirabeau will be on his way to Besançon to-morrow. Duras' regiment is there, and he joins it."

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\* Father of the great orator.

"Poor boy," sighs the lady on the sofa. "He is but seventeen."

Madame de Tencin replies not; her thoughts have been turned to other objects. "They play at Cagnole, and play high at La Quinault's?" she says inquiringly.

"Sometimes, Madame," replies Helvetius.

"You were there, then, last night?"

"Frankly, yes, Madame."

"And d'Alembert?"

"D'Alembert also." Helvetius answers for him, and a smile passes over the face of the young man. For nowhere is gambling more reckless, more ruinous, than in the *salon* of Madame de Tencin. Helvetius is wealthy; he is a *protégé* she is proud of. He is young, handsome, brilliant; professes atheism, and is approved by Voltaire. She feels that society is greatly indebted to her for discerning the merits of this brilliant young man, and producing him in the *salon* at so early an age. Yet his superfluous cash, she considers, should not be diverted from her tables to fill the purses of actresses.

As for d'Alembert, except for a certain interest she takes in him, it matters not at all. He has nothing to lose. His only assured income is a yearly allowance of twelve hundred francs from the Chevalier Destouches, his reputed father. D'Alembert, as an infant of a few days old, was found, abandoned, on the steps of the church of St. Jean-Tourniquet, by a glazier, who took pity on the poor child and carried him home to his wife. These good people brought him up as their own son; his education being provided for by Madame de Tencin.

When she perceived that he gave promise of be-

coming distinguished among scientific and literary men, she was desirous of acknowledging him. But d'Alembert declined the honor, saying, "The only mother he knew was the woman who had rescued and nursed him in infancy." On the other hand, it is asserted that he was so mortified at the generally supposed obscurity of his birth, that he would have been only too happy to have accepted the recognition of Madame de Tencin or Destouches, had they really offered it. However, he frequents her *salon*, and her patronage is useful to him. She has lost none of her *prestige* by the misadventure that caused her temporary eclipse. She has resumed her place, and shines as brilliantly as ever among the stars of the Parisian world. Arrived, too, at that uncertain period of life called middle age, Madame de Tencin is even more distinguished than before. Forbidden philosophical books are secretly circulated through her influence; young men are formed in manners, initiated in the principles of the new school of thought, and develop their talent for wit in her *salon*.

Her brother, the archbishop, a firm partisan of the Bull *Unigenitus*, is at this time engaged in persecuting the venerable old bishop of Sénez, who has opposed the Bull, and is suspected of Jansenism. Fleury, so fond of peace, is much disturbed by this resurrection of the irrepressible Bull, as well as by the scenes of daily occurrence in Paris in the cemetery of St. Médard. There, a fanatical Jansenist, known as the Diâcre-Pâris, has recently been buried, and miracles are said to take place at his tomb. The cemetery is thronged. The lame man carried there, at once casts aside all aid and returns home running and leaping. The blind see; the dumb speak; the deaf

hear—so it is affirmed. The people, however, are more inclined to profane jesting than reverence, and the philosophers protest against such scenes, as the work of a knavish priesthood. The cemetery is to be closed, and Tencin, to whom such work is a labor of love, relieves the aged Fleury from much trouble and anxiety by his success in putting down the scandals of Jansenism, and compelling acceptance of the Bull.

Madame de Tencin has, therefore, some influence with the cardinal-minister, and, having become devout, has exerted it on the side of morality. It was she who induced the cardinal to refuse the wealthy La Poplinière the renewal of his term of *fermier-général*, unless he made his mistress his wife. He had long promised to do so; but *Mdlle. Daucour*, the lady in question, complained of the delay in the performance of his promise. Madame de Tencin was her friend. Into her sympathetic ear she poured the story of her wrongs. Virtuously indignant, she undertook *Mdlle. Daucour's* cause, requesting only secrecy on her part. A word to the cardinal, and a hint from the king—who desired that his court and his people should follow his example of conjugal fidelity—very soon after made *Mdlle. Daucour, Madame de La Poplinière*.

*M. de La Poplinière* was not perhaps the richest of the financiers of Paris. The famous *Samuel Bernard* was no doubt a much richer man, and the extreme benevolence of his character led him to make a far nobler use of his wealth than *M. de La Poplinière* did of his. The latter was chiefly known for his magnificent style of living. His *hôtel* in the *Rue St. Antoine* was furnished with a splendor that vied with that of the *Hôtel Lesdiguières*,

His house at Auteuil, on a smaller scale, was a sort of palace of the genii. Boucher was called from his silk-draped *boudoir* to paint on the panels of the *salons* some of those exquisite designs in which he so greatly excelled. There were fine specimens of Natoire's far-famed decorative work, and portraits of stage beauties by Carle Vanloo and Largillière, *fils* (who was called the Vandyke of France, and who continued to paint portraits with undiminished skill until near the age of ninety). M. de La Poplinière was not only a liberal patron of the arts, but a giver of sumptuous banquets. His hôtel was the general resort of the wits, choice spirits, philosophers, stars of the theatrical and musical world, painters of celebrity, and a fair sprinkling of the nobility.

Naturally, the incense of flattery was unsparingly bestowed on him. It is therefore not surprising to find him a little vain of his social achievements. But he was a remarkably genial host, rather distinguished in appearance, and having married Mdlle. Daucour, he presented her to his friends with some pride. For she was a young and charming woman, very musical, witty, and agreeable, and, as he conceived, did honor to his choice. Foreigners of distinction often visited M. de La Poplinière. A portion of his hôtel was set apart for the reception of the *virtuosi* of other nations, who, when sojourning in Paris for awhile, accepted, as his guests, the hospitality of his princely establishment. Italian painters, sculptors, and musicians were sure of a gracious welcome, both from Monsieur and Madame.

Rameau, patronized by Madame de La Poplinière, had an apartment assigned him, with the appointment of organist; a chapel, also a small theatre, being attached to the hôtel. In the beautiful little theatre

Rameau officiated as *chef d'orchestre*. On Sundays, at Mass, he improvised on the organ. The mingled sweetness and sadness of his strains; his "religious sensibility," as Diderot, then young, was accustomed to say, greatly impressed his hearers; and none more than Diderot himself—the most highly gifted of the philosophic band, though, unhappily, of so ill-organized a mind.

The *petits-soupers* at Auteuil outrivalled all others. Not merely in the repast itself; in the magnificent silver table service, of artistic design and exquisite workmanship; but in the general arrangements. Guests, taken there for the first time, are said to have been as startlingly surprised as though some brilliantly lighted scene of enchantment had suddenly opened before them. Perfumes, flowers, scenic illusions, music, instrumental and vocal, by unseen performers, a perfect intoxication of the senses. No wonder that Mdlle. Daucour should have desired permanently to dwell in this fairy bower; that she should have been grateful to her dear Madame de Tencin for the word in season dropped into the ear of the good cardinal, always so anxious to help society to reform.

She was a much envied woman in the fashionable world of Paris, in spite of a singularly laughable crotchet of M. de La Poplinière, who, while adopting in other respects the manners and customs of aristocratic society, was actually so barbaric in his ideas, that he refused to allow his wife the services of an *ami intime*. He chose to take the duties of that office on himself, and was so boyishly romantic as to allow it to appear that he had an affectionate regard for his wife. Some sharp-sighted ladies kept a vigilant eye on her; just to see how she bore such tyranny. But all went on



well, until "this long dream of happiness," as it was jestingly termed, was one evening the subject of conversation and laughter in a *salon* where a number of ladies were amusing themselves with their "purfling," and gentlemen with their embroidery. One of them was that Mephistopheles of French society, of whom it was said "that like the serpent he was resolved to conquer the world, through woman"—the infamous Duc de Richelieu.

Hitherto he had honored La Poplinière with but little of his company. The reunions of *artistes* possessed small attraction for him, and the host, to his mind, was far too pretentious—putting himself on a level with *grands seigneurs* such as he; though Richelieu, in fact, had but little to plume himself upon in his ancestry. However, he has now a worthy motive for renewing his acquaintance with the magnificent financier, to whom anonymous notes are soon after constantly addressed, attributing disparaging conduct to his wife. He has confidence in her and disregards such insinuations. But during her absence at a *fête*, a more explicit letter reaches him. He is induced to push his inquiries further, and, to his intense dismay, he is compelled to give credence to the accusations against her. He orders that the doors be closed, and admission refused on her return. News of what has occurred is carried to her. Meeting with her husband's friend, the Maréchal de Saxe, she prays him to take her home in his carriage. He does so, and thrusting aside the servant, who would prevent her from entering, he leads her to her husband. "Listen," he says, "for a moment to your wife, she desires to justify herself in your eyes." He then leaves them together.

La Poplinière is in a distracted state of mind; he turns sadly from his wife, when, throwing herself on her knees, she implores forgiveness for the wrong she has done him. Her confession increases both his anger and his grief. He desires her to leave his house, and she does so on the following day, to take up her abode in a humble cottage at Passy, with a small monthly allowance for her support from her husband. There she pines away; grief, remorse, despair, soon do their work, and La Poplinière is released from the fair frail wife who had so bitterly deceived him, but whom, nevertheless, he unceasingly regrets. As, at the marriage of Mdlle. de Valois, Richelieu presented himself to gaze unmoved on the grief of the young girl whose love he had won, and who was sacrificing herself for him, so this insidious seducer had the audacity and barbarity similarly to insult the erring wife who, so weakly yielding to his blandishments, had brought ruin and disgrace on her head.

Richelieu had then just married his second wife, Mdlle. de Guise, the heiress of the Duc de Lorraine. But he confessed that what pleased him most in this marriage was the right it gave him to add the cross of Lorraine and the golden eaglets of a sovereign house to his family arms. He therefore was not restrained by any feeling for his bride from gratifying his desire to ascertain how the financier's wife was affected by the sudden transition from affluence and happiness to straitened means, neglect, and contempt.

## CHAPTER XXI.

Thé à l'Anglaise and a Lecture.—The Queen's Privy Purse.—The President Hénault.—Le Marquis d'Argenson.—Defence of the Cardinal.—The Cardinal's Petit Coucher.—Mademoiselle Aïssé.—The Chevalier d'Aidye.—The Sleep of Death.—History of the Fair Haidée.—Les Devotionnettes.—A Warning Sign from on High.—Miss Black.

A LETTER, informing Madame de Tencin of the death of her friend and *protégée*, Madame de la Poplinière, was put into her hands when her thoughts were occupied, as we have noticed, with the rival gambling tables of the *salon* Quinault. It afforded her a ready theme for moralizing, as well on the sad event itself, as generally, on the manners of the age. Having left off rouge, she could, of course, with much propriety, be severe on that subject. And she was severe, for the especial benefit of the two youths, Helvetius and d'Alembert, respecting whose success in society—not the society of actresses, as she remarked—she might naturally be supposed to feel anxious, as they had made their *début* under her auspices and in her *salon*.

With well simulated reverence they listened to the preaching of the reformed sinner (for such in some sense she was), while sipping their tea, ordered in as a support to her lecture. *Thé à l'Anglaise*, in the more severe *salons*, such as that of Madame de Tencin, was preferred as an accompaniment to conversation, and “a something to do,” to embroidering *applique*, or cutting out pictures, and the working of worsted roses.

The tea-table is placed in front of the sofa, where the Circassian lady reclines, though not so much from indolence as because she is ill. Her malady is consumption, a very prevalent one at the period in question. It is a fitful, deceptive disease. She fancies to-day that she really has nothing but a slight feeling of languor to overcome, and she will be perfectly well. Hence her visit to Madame de Tencin, who, after being her inveterate enemy, is become her very dear friend, but may be her enemy again. It is the way, you know, of womankind to be thus capricious in their so-called friendships. But let us not moralize: it is 'flat, stale, and unprofitable' so to do.

The warnings and teachings of the usually brilliant Madame de Tencin had reached the very verge of drowsiness, when two *habitués* of her *salon* fortunately dropped in and turned the sluggish current of conversation into another channel. One of the arrivals was the president, Hénault, controller of the queen's household, and keeper of her privy purse—the last an office of no great responsibility, for the cardinal allowed but little to be put into the purse. Its disbursements were, therefore, scarcely more important than the distributing of pence to the poor. The queen had, indeed, complained to the king of the cardinal's stinginess; he, however, only recommended her to follow his example, and ask him for nothing; when she would be sure of meeting with no refusal.

But Hénault has a literary reputation, and it is founded on his chronological histories of France, Spain, and Portugal. His suppers have made him famous in social circles, and his wit has gained him brevet rank in the *salon* of the vivacious Duchesse du Maine. There are people who consider Hénault as,

before all things, *un bon vivant*. But his *gourmandise*, we learn, was the "*gourmandise* of choice spirits"—an enlightened appreciation of the *nuances* of flavor in savory dishes, and the delicate *bouquet* of choice wines. Madame du Deffant said of the president (he was president of the parliament of Paris) that "supper was one of the essential qualities of the man. Take that away, what remains to him?" she asked. Voltaire judged differently, and often addressed flattering lines to his friend, whose talent he could appreciate as well as his suppers:

" Hénault, fameux par vos soupers  
Et par votre chronologie,  
Par des vers au bon coin frappés  
Pleins de douceurs et d'harmonie.

" Les femmes vous ont pris fort souvent  
Pour un ignorant fort aimable;  
Les gens en *us*, pour un savant,  
Et le Dieu joufflu de la table  
Pour un connaisseur fort gourmand."\*

Hénault has but just left Madame du Deffant, more than usually oppressed by the demon *ennui*. He has confided her to the tender care of another devoted friend, the Marquis de Pont de Veyle. Often the Marquis spends the live-long day seated at one corner of her fire-place, the Marquise occupying the opposite side—he gazing upon her, as though enjoying the spectacle of a martyr to *ennui*, she affecting not to be aware of his presence.

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\* " Hénault, famous for your suppers, your chronology, and your verses with the ring of true metal, full of sweetness and harmony. Women often take you for an amiable ignoramus, philosophers for a *savant*, and the jolly God of the table for a most fastidious connoisseur."

The other addition to Madame de Tencin's tea-table guests is the Marquis d'Argenson, a severe censurer of the manners and morals of the period.

He complains of the low tone that now prevails in circles that once were called good society. Conversation, he says, is a thing of the past. Philosophy, intent only on breaking down the barriers that should separate classes, fills every *salon* with a heterogeneous mob, amongst whom he finds himself a stranger, and far more solitary than when alone in his study with no society but that of his books. "If," he continues, "any subject of interest should perchance be introduced in these *salons*, immediately the frivolous company begin to laugh, to yawn, to talk all at once, to ask questions the most irrelevant; being too idle to listen, too ignorant to reason. He can compare them only to a number of birds twittering in a bush, and all piping at random, each one striving only to be loudest."

The *salon* in which he has for years been accustomed to lament over the decline of good manners no longer exists. Madame de Lambert has passed away, at the age of eighty-six. "In her circle courtesy was a sentiment of the mind, and humanity dwelt in the heart. The politeness which has taken the place of courtesy consists of an infinity of words without meaning; while humanity, having left the heart for the lips, has no longer any base of esteem or affection."

The Marquis is an admirer of the Cardinal-minister. "They who would like to see him superseded," he says, "deny him the genius of a statesman, and condemn his policy as wanting in breadth and boldness. Yet," urges the Marquis, in the warmth of his attach-

ment to the old cardinal, "he has given proof of the possession of the ministerial qualities of justness and solidity in his views and intentions, and of frankness and good faith in his dealings with foreigners. His policy is sufficiently adroit without being treacherous; he is clear-sighted enough to discern the snares and traps laid for him by courtiers who would displace him, and he cleverly avoids them, or, at times, turns them to account, without resorting to perfidious means or adopting Machiavellian measures."

Replying to the questioning of the ladies, d'Argenson informs them that he was present on the previous evening at that most ridiculous yet amusing spectacle, called by the people "*le petit coucher* of the Cardinal-king." What precedent the cardinal could produce for assuming such a prerogative to belong to the post he fills, the Marquis declares he knows not. For Fleury accepts no title but that of Minister of State, though it is certain that the whole power of the State is in his hands—far more so, and more uncontestedly, than it was ever possessed by Richelieu by means of his numerous executions, or by Mazarin with all his intrigues.

Every evening the whole of the court, with gentlemen, tradespeople, the idle and the busy, are waiting at the doors of the cardinal's apartment. When his eminence has passed into his dressing-room, the doors are opened, the people enter and assist at the cardinal's preparations for bed. They see him divest himself of his clothing, put on his night-shirt, and comb his flowing white locks, which time has now very much thinned. During this operation he speaks of the chit-chat and news of the day, interspersed with many a jest and *bon-mot*, sometimes good, sometimes bad, but all of

which are laughed at and applauded by his auditors. Some remonstrances on this practice of joking in public were addressed to him by the Abbé de Pomprona, who has much influence with the old cardinal, and wished to convince him, without actually saying so, that his joking was rather undignified. He told him an epigram, or two, then current, respecting the *petit coucher* itself. But Fleury has not seen fit to make any change—believing the people to be anxious to see him, and having, as he said, no other spare time in which to gratify them without intruding on the hours devoted to business of State.

As the Marquis ceases speaking, Mdlle. Aïssé, or the fair Haidée, as she is sometimes called, rises from the sofa. The fair, pale face is suddenly suffused with a roseate glow; the large soft eyes light up with pleasure. How graceful, how elegant her figure! By the beauty that remains, one perceives how beautiful she must have been in the first blush of youth, when her charms were the theme of general admiration, and she was celebrated as

“Aïssé qui de la Grèce épuisa la beauté.”\*

She is now thirty-eight or thirty-nine years of age; a victim of consumption, fading away daily, though she cannot realize what is clearly apparent to all but herself. The change from languor to animation has been caused by the entrance of the Chevalier d'Aidye, a relative of the Marquis de Saint-Aulaire, and a knight of St. John of Jerusalem. It is the dream of Haidée that this lover of hers does not marry her, because she will not consent to an alliance which she believes prejudi-

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\*“Aïssé who robbed Greece of beauty.”



cial to his interests. Her own fortune is small, and he has scarcely at command the means and influence to purchase a dispensation from his vow of celibacy, even if he desired it. But he is rather the adored than the adorer. He submits to be loved, and the love lavished upon him is so strong, so true, that he must be marble-hearted indeed did he not respond to it with, at least, a tender pity akin to love.

But Mdlle. Aïssé's chair is waiting. The Chevalier will probably escort her home. Madame de Tencin and her guests compliment and congratulate the beautiful Circassian on her apparently improved health. She looks bright and happy as she leaves the *salon*, leaning on her Chevalier's arm. But she has exerted herself unusually to-day, and feels much fatigued on arriving at her home; so much so that, reclining on a sofa, she sinks almost immediately into a deep slumber. It has continued an hour or more, yet still she sleeps; she stirs not.

The Chevalier waits to say farewell. He is a great lover of the chase, and is about to leave Paris for awhile, to hunt the wild boar and the wolf on his estate in the forest of Poitou. He approaches the sofa. He is struck by the ashy paleness of the sleeper; then raises the arm that hangs listlessly by her side. Ah! how cold! how nerveless. All know that touch, and what a thrill it sends through the frame—the Chevalier's lady-love sleeps the sleep of death!

Many had been the guesses and speculations, in years gone by, as to the real origin of Mdlle. Aïssé; but latterly, except in the immediate circle in which she was brought up, the gay world had almost forgotten her. She had withdrawn from it, and the charm of more youthful beauties now formed the subject of the

flattering effusions of drawing-room poets. She first came to France at about the age of four years with the Comte de Ferriol, French Ambassador at the court of the Sultan. He had bought her for three hundred piasters in the slave-market at Constantinople, having, when casually passing through it, been struck by her childish grace, her beauty, and her tears. He named her Haidée, and placed her, on his return, with his brother's wife, Madame de Ferriol, to be carefully educated during his further absence in Turkey. Notwithstanding this story, it was generally believed that the little girl was the Count's own daughter, and her mother the very handsome Turkish woman who came to France with them, and resided in his house while he remained in Paris.

It was, however, given out that Haidée was actually a Circassian princess, captured, with other children and women, by a party of Turks on a marauding expedition into the territory of the prince, her father. Indistinct memories were said to float in her mind of the splendors of the palace that was her early home, and were received as confirmatory of M. de Ferriol's account of his *protégée*. The Count provided liberally for her. She was reared in luxury, and dressed at all times as befitted the rank of a princess and her superb Oriental beauty.

The hôtel Ferriol was the resort of the *beaux esprits* of the dissolute society of the regency. Madame de Ferriol, like her sister, Madame de Tencin, was a frequenter of the Palais Royal, and was the friend of Madame de Parabère and the regent's mistresses generally. In this corrupt society the youthful Haidée grew to womanhood. She says of herself, "I have been the sport of the passions." But by and by

Madame de Ferriol and her sister became what the old cardinal, with a slightly sarcastic smile, used to call "*dévotionnettes*." They left off rouge, went daily to mass and confessed. Then arose Madame de Ferriol's anxiety for the conversion of her brother's *protégée*. But already she was half converted. She had fallen in love with the Chevalier, and desired to reform, fearing that she was unworthy of his love. "My bad conduct has made me wretched," she exclaims.

Henceforth the Chevalier is all the world to her. Yet still she continues to appear at the theatre with Madame de Parabère, rather *naïvely* expressing a hope that it may be charitably supposed she is not acquainted with the secrets of her dissolute life. Voltaire addressed many of his adulatory verses to Mdlle. Aïssé, and sometimes corresponded with her. The sons of Madame de Ferriol, the Marquis de Pont de Veyle and le Comte d'Argental, were his dear angels. Naturally, then, she had her full share of the poetic incense he distributed so lavishly.

When the Comte de Ferriol died, he left his adopted daughter a legacy of fifty thousand francs, and an annuity of four thousand.

It would seem that the Duc d'Orleans, son of the regent, had seen and admired Mdlle. Aïssé at the Palais Royal reunions. Having become a widower two years after his marriage with the Princess of Baden, and hearing that Mdlle. Aïssé had left off rouge and was now a strict devotee, he determined, after due consideration, to ask her to be his wife—*à la main gauche*, perchance; or he may have thought that, as a Circassian princess, she was eligible as regarded royal birth; for his ideas concerning the affairs of every-day life were no less singular than his religious

views. On arriving at her residence on his matrimonial errand, the lady was not at the moment able to receive him. While waiting for her appearance, it happened that the fastenings of some portion of his clothing gave way. He was much struck by so remarkable a circumstance; and, with devout resignation, received it as a warning sign from on high that the marriage he contemplated was not one of those made in heaven, therefore not approved there.

Congratulating himself on being spared from having run counter to the wishes of Providence, he addressed a few crazy compliments to the lady and took his leave, without uttering a word on the subject to which she owed his visit. He was known to be not quite *compos mentis*, so that his eccentricities rarely excited surprise. He believed neither in births nor deaths. When told of the death of Mdlle. Aïssé, he was exceedingly angry, said it was impossible; the king had concealed her to keep her out of his sight.

A daughter, born in England, when Mdlle. Aïssé was on a visit to the Countess of Bolingbroke, was christened Célanie, and afterwards brought up in France at the Convent of Sens, under the name of Miss Black. In those very unpleasing letters to Madame Calendrini, consisting chiefly of idle gossip concerning the depraved society of her day, Mdlle. Aïssé's visits to this daughter are sometimes referred to. In 1740 the Chevalier acknowledged Miss Black, and she left her convent to marry the Vicomte de Nanthia—un gentilhomme de Périgord.

Voltaire, writing to his dear angel d'Argental, in 1761, mentions the death of the Chevalier d'Aidye, and the end of this little romance. On the history or legend of this supposed Circassian princess the opera of Haidée is thought to have been founded.

## CHAPTER XXII.

Conspiracy of the Marmosets.—The Duc de Gêvres.—The Ducal Gambling-House.—An Interesting Invalid.—Court Secrets.—Tapestry-Working Statesmen.—The Queen grows Jealous.—The Coiffure of Madame de Gontaut.—Madame de Mailly.—The King accepts a Mistress.—The Petits-Soupers at Choisy.—Stanislaus Leczinski.—The Brave Bréhant de Plélo.—The Court of Lorraine.—Death of Madame de Vintimille.

VERY smoothly, very pleasantly, would have glided on the life of the aged Cardinal-minister, but that, from time to time, theological quarrels were forced on his attention by the unquiet and domineering spirit of a portion of the clergy. Still, he kept on the even tenor of his way, on the whole but slightly disturbed by them. If his ministerial course did not always prove a pathway of roses, the thorns that had hitherto beset it were few.

When Mazarin died, the *chansonniers* wrote what they called his epitaph:

“Ci gît l'Eminence deuxième,  
Dieu nous garde d'un troisième.”\*

But the mild sway of “*Son Eminence troisième*,” and his economical administration of the finances, already gave more than a promise to France of returning national prosperity. The daily prayer of the people—as the best blessing that heaven could bestow on

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\* “Here lies Cardinal number two,  
Heaven defend us from a third.”

them—was that the old cardinal's life might be prolonged, and his bodily health and mental vigor continue unimpaired. Clouds, however, were beginning to obscure the political horizon. There were rumors of war and signs of domestic annoyances. Of the latter was the intrigue named the "Conspiracy of the Marmosets."

The Ducs de Gêvres and d'Épernon, with M. de Coigny, court pages, weary of the monotony of the court, and of so unprecedented a state of things as a young king without a *maîtresse-en-titre*, resolved to attempt to bring about the change they had long vainly been waiting for. They looked on the cardinal as the cause of the king's persistent indifference to the unceasing attacks made upon him by aspiring ladies. By insidiously disparaging him, as too much attached to the "Système Antiquaille," they hoped to succeed in undermining his influence; also securing his dismissal. The Duc de Richelieu secretly supported these views of the younger courtiers. He was a favorite with the king, whose *ennui* he sometimes dispelled by highly embellished narrations of his numerous adventures. He would also gayly rally him on his "extraordinary virtue," and laughingly suggest that the beautiful Mdlle. de A—— or Mdme. de B—— might almost contest the palm of beauty with the queen.

Louis XV. was as remarkably taciturn as polite and gracious in manner. He therefore replied not to this *badinage*, which he permitted because it amused him. He smiled only; what his thoughts were it would have been difficult to guess. To hint at the cardinal's imperfections was, as Richelieu doubtless knew, more perilous than to insinuate that there were younger

and fairer women than the queen. He did not venture to attempt it, but discreetly left that hazardous part of the intrigue to others.

The Duc de Gêvres was at his château at St. Ouen, when the king suddenly took a fancy to employ his idle hours in working tapestry, as so many gentlemen did at that period. Impatient to begin, a messenger was despatched immediately to Paris, for canvas for the seats of four chairs, wools, silks, needles, and whatever else might be needed for his undertaking; another messenger, at the same time, went off in all haste to summon the Duc de Gêvres to Versailles. He excelled in all the fashionable gentlemanlike needlework of the day, and the king wished for instruction from so great a master in the art. The duke lived in princely style at St. Ouen—chamberlains, gentlemen of the household, and a retinue scarcely less numerous than that usually accompanying the king. Yet he was overwhelmed with debts, and his estates were mortgaged. His hôtel in Paris was let as a gambling-house, and from his share of the proceeds of the tables he now derived his sole income. It was, however, a large one; for gambling had become a mania with all classes.

When the messenger from Versailles arrived at St. Ouen, the duke, slightly indisposed it was said, was reclining, supported by cushions, on a couch of green and gold damask, with curtains of the same, looped back by green ribands and roses. He was wrapped in a wadded robe de chambre of green and gold silk; but, as a covering for his head, instead of a cap of some sort, the interesting invalid wore a gray felt Henri IV. hat, bordered with green and gold and adorned with a long green feather. A green and gold

coverlet was partly thrown over him, from under which peeped forth a green and gold slipper. A green and gold fan, and a bunch of rue for a *bouquet*, lay on the couch; a green and gold work-table stood beside it, on which were his scissors and prints for *applique*. His tapestry frame was near at hand; but he was then amusing himself with green silk and gold thread knotting.

In spite of his distressingly enfeebled condition, the duke magnanimously responded to the call of his sovereign. The Duc d'Épernon (whose especial weakness was a fondness for surgery, and who always had a lancet with him; being ready and willing to bleed any one weak enough to allow him) accompanied his friend, and with all speed they proceeded to Versailles. The king had received the materials for his work, and was admiring the designs for his chair seats. The young Comte de Maurepas, already known for his caustic remarks, was with him. After listening to the eloquence of the duke on the subject of needlework, but apparently with more contempt than admiration, the count said, addressing the king: "Sire, your majesty is far more courageous than your great ancestor, Louis XIV."

"How so?" inquired the king.

"He," replied Maurepas, "would never undertake more than one *siège* (siege or seat) at a time; but your majesty has the courage to undertake four."

Whether the king received this remark as complimentary or otherwise, we are not informed.

The tapestry work afforded the Duc de Gêvres, and the other courtiers in his plot, the opportunity they had desired of impressing their views on the mind of the king. And they seem to have brought him so



near to their way of thinking, that he agreed with them that the cardinal had arrived at a time of life when the business of State must naturally be a burden, and that it was desirable to relieve him of it. His courtiers were delighted; but were unwilling to have it known that it was they who had advised the displacement of Fleury. The king promised absolute secrecy. But the cardinal had more friends than foes in the court. Secrets to be kept there "should be dumb to very walls." But this secret was known at Issy, where the cardinal was staying, the very next day.

Fleury never remonstrated. Repairing at once to Versailles, he tendered his resignation, assigning, as a reason for so doing, those considerations urged on the king by the Duc de Gêvres on the previous morning. The king was confused; he seemed as one conscience-stricken. The horrors of the impending situation at the same time rose up before his indolent mind. How was he to carry on the government of his kingdom if his preceptor were not at his elbow to direct him? Where find a minister disinterested and able as Fleury had proved himself? or, if as able, that could replace the confidant, the friend, the parent he had been to him from childhood? He implored the old cardinal still to keep in his hands the guidance of the helm of State; and at the same time informed him who were his foes, and the nature of their counsels. More disposed to be amused at this shallow intrigue than to take revenge on the tapestry-working statesmen, the cardinal thought the duke and his companions sufficiently punished by their mortification at the exposure of their schemes, and the order from him, as minister, signed by the king, to refrain from visiting either Paris or Versailles for the next few months.

This plot, which threatened so much and achieved so little, was soon after the theme of conversation and laughter in the *salons* as the "conspiracy of the marmosets," an epithet which did not tend to soothe the vexed feelings of its authors. However, one result of this intrigue was to convince the court that the reign of Fleury was to endure to the end of his days. As he had passed his eightieth year, there were many who believed or hoped that the term of those days was nigh at hand. Yet it was generally conceded that the king must at once be roused from his lethargy, apathy, or whatever the spell might be, that rendered him insensible to the blandishments of beauty, and blinded him to the faded appearance of the queen. The freshness of her complexion was gone; she had a care-worn look, and, in her manner generally, there was an expression of languor. With her seven children grouped around her, she looked staid and matronly as a woman of forty, though but in her thirty-first year; the king was in his twenty-fourth, and probably more remarkably handsome than at any other period of his life.

Unfortunately, the queen was growing jealous, and, being wanting in tact and spirit, displayed her feelings ridiculously. A certain Madame de Gontaut, an exceedingly pretty woman, whom the queen suspected of a desire to supplant her, was made to feel her resentment by a constant fault-finding with her head-dress. Whenever she made her appearance, dressed, as she believed, to perfection, poor Marie Leczinska would single her out for disapproving remarks. Calling her to her, she proceeded, with an affectation of graciousness, to remedy the supposed defective arrangement of the lady's *coiffure*, her object

being nothing more than to ruffle and disarrange it, that she might appear to disadvantage in the eyes of the king. It was a very poor *ruse*, and caused much amusement; to none more than to Madame de Gontaut herself—a sparkling brunette, to whose beauty a slight dishevelment of the hair often gave added piquancy.

But it was not Madame de Gontaut, but Mdlle. de Nesle—soon after Comtesse de Mailly—who was destined to fill the honorable post of *maitresse-en-titre*, so long tantalizingly kept vacant. She has been compared to the Duchesse de la Vallière; but except that the countess, like the duchess, was a king's mistress, the resemblance between them is not striking. Previous to a full assumption of the new dignity, the etiquette seems to have been, presentation to the queen, and her acceptance of her rival, whether willing or not, as one of the ladies of the palace.

Madame de Mailly, one learns with surprise, was of the Rambouillet circle (surely a stray black sheep that had slipped in unawares). She was the eldest of the five daughters of the Marquis de Nesle. Richelieu had remarked her, as possessing the audacity and effrontery necessary "to throw herself at the king's head," which she did with all the fervor of a bacchante: for she loved the juice of the grape, and especially foaming champagne, which she challenged the king to drink with her, bumper for bumper. In their earlier revels and *petits-soupers* she far surpassed him in the quantity she could take with impunity. The cardinal is said to have approved the choice of this woman as a mistress for the king. Perceiving that a mistress was inevitable, he looked upon her selection as an affair of State. Madame de Mailly was considered disinterested—attached to the king, in fact.

She would therefore be an inexpensive superfluity, and as she possessed neither ability nor ambition, it was not likely she would attempt to interfere in the concerns of government: consequently he regarded her as the most eligible of the many noble ladies then contending for the vacant post.

The king had scarcely a voice in the matter. He neither loved nor admired Madame de Mailly. He did not seek her, but accepted her as the mistress provided for him, with the same apathy and indifference he had shown when provided with a wife. Perhaps no young man was ever more entirely thrust into vice than Louis XV. The dissolute men and women of the court, reared in the depraved society of the regency, long despaired of his becoming one of them. But the first plunge taken, unhappily, none dived deeper into the slough of vice than he. Fits of remorse oppressed him at times, and he continued strictly to perform the outward duties of religion. The queen, unintellectual and full of narrow-minded bigotry, was incapable of exerting any beneficial influence upon him. The more he became alienated from her, the more humble and timid did she appear in his presence; though, as in his religion, so in every mark of outward respect towards his wife, he was never known to fail.

Following the example of the great nobles of his court, he had his *petite maison*—purchasing Choisy for that purpose. There he had his private kitchen, fitted up with every requisite for the practice of the art of which he was so efficient an *amateur*. Wearing the white jacket, apron, and cap of a *chef-de-cuisine*, he would often prepare some choice dish, to regale those of his intimates who were admitted to share in the

orgies of the *petits-soupers* of Choisy. The disorder that prevailed there becoming publicly known, so much indignation was expressed by the people that the cardinal thought it right to remonstrate on such conduct. The king replied, "very dryly," as De Tocqueville observes: "I have abandoned to you the conduct of my kingdom, I hope you will leave me master of my private affairs."

At about the same time that the change took place in the habits of Louis XV., news was received of the death of Augustus of Poland, and the re-election of Stanislaus to the throne he already had found so unstable a seat. He was by no means desirous of resuming so uncertain a dignity. Russia, his former foe, favored the pretensions of another Elector of Saxony, Augustus, the late king's son; but three fourths of the nation had pronounced in favor of the deposed King Stanislaus. Content in his retirement at Weissenberg, he still made it a point of honor to respond to the call of his countrymen, lest it should appear to them that his courage was not equal to his fortunes. Yet he knew from experience how fickle was the temperament of this "nation of high-souled cavaliers;" that fidelity was not to be relied upon, but rather desertion when fidelity should most be needed.

Without money or troops—though he probably depended on aid from France—he set out for Poland, entered Warsaw in disguise, and a few days after was proclaimed king by his partisans. A Russian army of ten thousand men, commanded by the famous General Munich, with auxiliary troops from Austria, had already entered Poland, to support the claims of the Elector. The partisans of Stanislaus then fell away from him, or were quickly dispersed; he escaping,

with difficulty, to Dantzic, where, however, he was well received. There he awaited the French troops. Neither Louis XV. nor the cardinal—indisposed as was the latter to engage in war—could entirely desert him. A small detachment of fifteen hundred men was therefore embarked in two or three of the crazy old vessels then composing the French navy.

Dantzic was besieged by Munich when the French troops arrived in the Sound. The futility of the aid he had brought induced the commander of the expedition to refrain from landing his men. But his return to France was opposed by the young Comte Bréhant de Plélo, the French Envoy at Copenhagen. He thought it an ignominious flight, dishonoring to France; and, taking upon himself the command of the expedition, Dantzic was again approached. The troops were disembarked, and the first Russian line attacked; but the daring young commander was quickly overpowered. He fell, sword in hand, fighting, and covered with wounds. He had anticipated such a fate; but resolved to brave it, to save the honor of the French name. His small detachment of troops capitulated, after holding out for some time in the advantageous position they had taken up. They were sent to St. Petersburg, and, by command of the Empress Anne, treated with marked distinction.

Dantzic was taken by the Russian general. A price was set on the head of Stanislaus, who, however, aided by some of his followers, contrived to leave the city unrecognized. After assuming various disguises, and encountering many perilous risks and hair-breadth escapes, always closely pursued by the enemy, he at last, in sad plight, but in safety, reached Marienwerder, the frontier town of ducal Prussia. The war that followed these events resulted in a peace which

gave the sovereignty of the Duchy of Bar, and Principality of Lorraine, to Stanislaus, with their reversion to France at his death. He retained the title of king; but renounced all claim to the throne of Poland. In the course of this war the two great generals of Louis XIV. lost their lives—Marshal Villars, in his eighty-third year, and Marshal Berwick, the natural son of James II.

After so many ups and downs of fortune, Stanislaus was very comfortably settled in the evening of his life. He was much beloved in his new domains, and Lorraine was prosperous and peaceful under his benignant rule. It became the fashion to pay frequent visits to the little court of Lorraine, where there was much less cold etiquette, and far more geniality and gayety, than at Versailles: just as the palace Stanislaus built for himself, in imitation of that grandiose structure, was less stately in appearance, but infinitely more desirable as a dwelling. The happy ending of her father's troubles was a consolation to the queen, in the midst of the many vexations that beset her, and the frequent mortifications she was subjected to in the dissolute French court.

Madame de Mailly no longer reigned at Versailles. Like Stanislaus, she had twice been deposed and re-elected. In the intervals, she left off rouge, confessed, and sojourned for awhile at the Carmelites. The death of her successor had just occurred; and Louis, in silence and solitude, was bemoaning his widowed condition, and refusing to be comforted. Madame de Vintimille had died suddenly, and, as usual, poison in some form—perfumes, gloves, or *billets-doux*—was suspected; suspicion, on this occasion, glancing at Madame de Mailly, and, more absurdly still, even looking askance at the old cardinal.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau.—The Salon of Mdme. Dupin.—Jean-Jacques and Mdme. de Crequy.—Feigned Confidences.—Jean-Jacques Returns to Paris.—Voltaire's Grand Homme.—Un Mari, à la Mode Louis XV.—Voltaire's "Mahomet."—Début of Mdlle. Clairon.—A Triumph.—Sensation for the Salons.

IN the autumn of 1741, Jean-Jacques Rousseau—whom, after a wandering aimless life, we now first hear of in Paris—had lately arrived from Venice, where he had cultivated, to a certain extent, a natural taste for music. Undue confidence in his musical talent, and in the value of some pleasing but simple compositions, flattered him with the hope of an artistic career. He had invented, as he supposed, a new system of musical notation by figures, which he was desirous of explaining in a discourse addressed to the members of the Académie des Sciences. In August, 1742, M. Reaumer procured him the opportunity he sought, and Jean-Jacques developed his scheme to a committee of qualified musicians, of whom Rameau, now in merited repute, was one.

To his immense disappointment, Rousseau learned that his system was not new, and that it had been already pronounced impracticable. He was then thirty years of age; eaten up by vanity; burning with a desire for notoriety; "willing to be hanged," as Voltaire said, "could he but have been gratified by his name being placed on the scaffold." An operatic trifle, "Les Muses Galantes," was the means of intro-



ducing him to M. de La Poplinière, at whose private theatre it was performed, and met with the approval of a friendly audience.

But Rousseau's ambition soared far beyond the reputation of an amateur; and his arrogance, no less than his ignorance, was displayed in his remark on the works of Rameau, whose life had been spent in the scientific study of music, to which he had been led by enthusiastic love of it from childhood. "Away with these distillers of barrack harmonies!" exclaimed Jean-Jacques, in his jealousy; while believing also that Rameau had seen a rival in him and his "Muses Galantes." Irritable, restless, distrustful, capricious, morbidly sensitive, a martyr to hypochondria, Jean-Jacques sometimes awakened sympathy, which he either repelled with brutality or rewarded with base ingratitude; while those who endeavored to serve him he hated and maligned. Idealized in a hundred volumes, a hundred years after his death, he no doubt appears a very different person from the Rousseau known to his contemporaries. But with such speculations these pages are not concerned.

As secretary in the family of the rich fermier-général, Dupin, Rousseau next appears on the scene. He has described the *salon* of Mdme. Dupin as frequented by the most distinguished society in Paris. Wealth, beauty, rank and learning; foreign ambassadors, great noblemen and titled ladies, forming her circle, according to Jean-Jacques. It may, however, be considered a somewhat exaggerated account of *un salon bourgeois*. At this time he was "quite a handsome young man," Madame de Crequy informs us, in the memoirs edited by M. Chanloup. He had called on Madame de Crequy, on the part of Madame Dupin, to inquire into

the character of a servant. The great lady was surprised that the *dame bourgeoise* should send to her for information of that nature, and was about to desire the messenger to make his inquiries of her steward, when a something in the expression of his countenance, she says, interested her.

Instead of acting on her first impulse and curtly dismissing him, she desired he would wait awhile. On inquiry, it appeared that the discharged servant, being a Protestant, had been unwilling to attend prayers in the private chapel of the château. The orthodox steward had therefore dismissed him. On hearing this, Jean-Jacques, in a melancholy tone, informed Madame de Crequy that he, too, was a Protestant, also a Swiss. This induced the lady to question him further, and they were deep in theological argument when the Nuncio was announced.

Rousseau had been humbly standing, hat in hand, while Madame de Crequy reasoned with him on his heresy. He was now motioned to a seat, which, in the utmost confusion, he stumbled into (his awkwardness was excessive), and the conversation then turned on Switzerland, which Jean-Jacques described in the glowing language of one carried back in imagination to the loved and regretted scenes of his youth. Madame de Crequy was convinced that M. Rousseau, although a heretic, possessed great cleverness and a warm heart, with much learning and candor of disposition. She told him she would be glad to see him again, and when he took leave, rose from her seat to bid him farewell. This, above all things, pleased him. "He needed it," he said, "as an encouragement, and to put him at ease in the presence of the great." "The noble, or rather ignoble, savage" was then con-

cealed under the mask of obsequiousness, and an air of mock humility. A few more years were required fully to develop "the natural man."

In the course of subsequent visits to Madame de Crequy, she discovered that he amused her with "feigned confidences." Naturally she was annoyed; but excused it, because she perceived, she said, "that he had more illusions in his head than want of truth in his character"—a judgment in which leniency and truth were combined. He had an illness, it appears, about this time. On his recovery he obtained, through the influence of the Dupin family, the post of private secretary to M. de Montaigu, then leaving Paris for Venice, as ambassador. This engagement continued for nearly two years, but with so much mutual dissatisfaction that it is surprising it lasted so long. In 1745 Jean-Jacques returned to Paris, poor in purse and with but gloomy prospects for the future. He was preparing that pretty little opera, "*Le Dévin du Village*." It was to his music he looked for success. He was also reading and studying. As a writer his talent was scarcely yet known even to himself. Somewhere about this time he made the acquaintance of Grimm and Diderot; but, as Marmontel says, "Jean-Jacques had not yet taken color."

Voltaire had been in Paris occasionally only for several years. He says in those brief "*Mémoires de M. de Voltaire, écrites par lui-même*:" "I was weary of the idle and turbulent life of Paris; of the crowd of fops; of the worthless books printed 'with the king's approval and permission;' and of the meanesses and plagiarisms of the paltry wretches who dishonored literature, when, in 1733, I became acquainted with a lady whose opinions were much the

same as my own. She had taken the resolution to spend several years in the country, far from the tumult of society, in order to cultivate her mind. This lady was the Marquise du Châtelet."

She was Voltaire's "respectable Emilie," sometimes "the divine," "the beautiful," "the sublime." He represents her, with much exaggeration, as rivalling Madame Dacier in classical learning. She was a philosopher, of course, a mathematician, metaphysician, geometrician, free-thinker, and "great man." Voltaire spent six years with her at her chateau at Cirey, on the frontiers of Lorraine—a dilapidated old chateau, of which the friends, in the intervals of their literary pursuits, superintended the repairing and embellishing. There, too, they received the visits of the philosophers and *savants* who passed that way; the amiable Emilie's courtesies to her learned guests often exciting bitter pangs of jealousy in the breast of Voltaire. For Emilie had a susceptible heart, "great man" though she was, not only in the complimentary sense in which Voltaire applied the epithet, but personally also in her outward appearance.

She resembled "an ugly grenadier," says her cousin, Madame de Crequy; and all her learning she profanely describes as "a sort of indigestible hotch-potch." The Marquis du Châtelet was Lieutenant-général of the province of Lorraine. A strict observer of the marital etiquette of the Louis XV. period, he never intruded on the learned leisure of his wife and her "guide, philosopher, and friend."

It was, however, in the solitude of Cirey that Voltaire wrote "Alzire," "Mérope," "L'Enfant Prodigue," and "Mahomet," and began his "Histoire générale depuis Charlemagne," etc.

A lawsuit then obliged Madame du Châtelet to take a journey to Brussels. Voltaire accompanied her; and, her legal business terminating in her favor, she became the possessor of the splendid Hôtel Lambert, in the Ile St. Louis, where she received the philosophers of extremest opinions, and the prosiest and profoundest of the *savants*. But as this terrible blue-stocking gave little or no heed to suppers and dinners, even the most learned *animals* of the world of philosophy preferred the *salon* and well-spread table of the more hospitable Madame de Tencin.

Voltaire, on returning to Paris, was desirous of producing his play of "Mahomet," at the Théâtre Français. It had been played at Lille, in 1741, as he wished to judge of its probable effect before bringing it out in Paris. While present at its first representation at Lille, a note from the King of Prussia, informing him of the victory at Molwitz, was received by Voltaire, who immediately read it to the audience. "You will see," he said to them, "how this victory will lead to another." But this can scarcely be called wit—rather it was clap-trap that appears to have answered the purpose he intended. The play of "Mahomet" was submitted to Crébillon in Paris. The censor condemned it. Voltaire complained to Fleury, who reversed the judgment of Crébillon, and the play was produced with great success. He afterwards, when seeking admission to the academy—objection being taken by Bishop Boyer to this work—sent it to the Pope, Benedict XIV., who replied very courteously, adding a gold medal to his thanks for the "Bellissima tragédia." Mdlle. Dumesnil played the heroine with her accustomed ability, and contributed greatly towards its success.

The theatre was well attended at this period. The greater part of Voltaire's plays had been written and produced, and had proved attractive. The company was also highly talented. Mdle. Quinault had retired to enjoy her ample fortune in private life, though still comparatively young and at the height of her fame. "La belle d'Angeville" shone as a *soubrette*, and Mdle. Dumesnil was still unrivalled in high tragedy, when a new *débutante* was announced. The *début* of a new actor or actress, or the first representation of a new play, was sure to bring an overflowing audience, filling every part of the house, and crowding the stage. The *débutante*, on this occasion, was a young actress of eighteen or nineteen, who for some years had wandered with itinerant companies from theatre to theatre through the provinces, playing in tragedy or comedy, or taking the *rôle* of prima donna in operatic pieces, and *première danseuse* in a *ballet*.

She had, however, gained some reputation at Rouen in the leading *soubrette* parts, and was now engaged to play alternately with Mdle. d'Angeville in the same line of characters. For her *débuts*, to the surprise of the whole company, she selected three tragedy parts, the opening one being Phèdre, the favorite part of Mdle. Dumesnil. Her presumption astonished the great actress, and excited general ridicule. Curiosity brought a larger audience than usual, and an ignominious failure was anticipated.

The curtain rises. The expected Abigail enters. Many of the audience had seen her at Rouen; but few—except that they are aware it is Mdle. Clairon's *début* they are to witness—would recognize her in that stately actress, who treads the stage with the dignity

and grace of a finished *artiste*. Perhaps now for the first time they notice her finely chiselled features, her noble brow, and air of command; little suited indeed to a lively *soubrette*, but which full well become Phèdre. Her voice, too—so full in its tones, so clear, deep, and impassioned—at once makes its due impression on her hearers.

Mdlle. Clairon has certainly taken her audience by surprise, and the town by storm; for they perceive that a great actress is before them. Her supposed foolish vanity is found to be conscious talent. The opportunity had come for its development; she has fully justified the confidence she felt in her own powers, and it is unanimously acknowledged that what she attempted she has done well, even more than well—grandly.

Three young men of rising literary reputation—Diderot, d'Alembert, and Grimm—witnessed this first appearance of Mdlle. Clairon in tragedy. They had expected an amusing rather than an edifying performance. Now, they eagerly seek the young actress to offer their congratulations, before leaving the theatre to spread her fame in the *salons*.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

Death of Cardinal Fleury.—His Government of France.—Proposed Monument to Fleury.—Disappointed Ambition.—Threatened Descent on England.—A Rival to Maurice de Saxe.—Seeking Refuge at Versailles.—The King's Hospitality.—The "Mutual Friend."—The Cardinal's Successor.—Going to the Wars.—A Solemn Thanksgiving.—M<sup>de</sup>m<sup>e</sup>. Le Normand d'Etioles.—Illness of the King.—"Le Bien-Aimé."—Louis' Letter to the Duchess.—Death of the Duchess.—Her Last Words.

GREAT changes had taken place in France during the last four years, both politically and socially. There had been war; many notabilities had passed away from the stage of life, and new celebrities had appeared. In 1736 died Louis XIV.'s favorite son, the Duc du Maine. His widowed duchess had since reappeared in society, and received the *beaux esprits*, at Sceaux, with even greater *éclat* than before. The Rambouillet circle was broken up; the Comte de Toulouse—several years the duke's junior—having died in 1737. His son, the Duc de Penthièvre, had gone to the wars, and, at the age of seventeen, had distinguished himself at the battle of Dettingen—that battle so disastrous to France, the ally of Charles Albert of Bavière, then contending with Maria Theresa for the Empire of Germany.

The Marquis de Fleury, nephew of the cardinal, was killed in that battle, and not long after—January 29, 1743—the cardinal died at Issy, while the war, undertaken contrary to his wishes and advice, was still rag-



ing. He had completed, within two or three months, his ninetieth year, and the seventeenth of his government. Rarely has any statesman begun his public career so late in life, or, having done so, retained power so long.

He was still in full possession of his mental faculties, but was oppressed with anxious fears as to the result of the war, and disturbed at the large expenditure of the public money it necessitated. His policy had been so essentially a policy of peace and conciliation, that he had not thought it necessary even to be ready for war, in order the better to ensure a continuance of peace. "Peace without, economy within," was his political motto, and the heaviest charge brought against him, as minister, was that in his condescension towards other nations, and fear of displeasing them, he sacrificed too much for the love, or the need, of peace.

Unlike Richelieu and Mazarin, Fleury left no fortune to his family. Two or three recently conferred empty titles and honors, and the post of *Premier gentilhomme de la chambre*, to his nephew, de Rosset, was all they derived from him. The revenue of his benefice was his only income. His tastes were simple; he was opposed to any assumption of state, or ostentatious parade. He had amassed no gold or silver plate, no collection of treasures of art. The furniture of his small establishment comprised only what was useful and good, without ornament; its value was estimated at not more than five thousand écus. "He governed France," writes De Tocqueville, "as he governed his own well-regulated small household, with the strictest order, exactness, and economy." The reputation of a great minister was denied him, but he was regretted

throughout France as a just and honorable one, who possessing great power, used it to promote, to the best of his ability, the welfare of the people and the prosperity of the nation.

As every event, however serious, was then seized upon for the subject of an epigram, it was said, when the cardinal died, that "France, having been ailing for the space of a hundred years, had been treated successively by three physicians, all attired in red. The first (Richelieu) had bled her; the second (Mazarin) had purged her; and the third (Fleury) had put her on a diet."

The king, with the Dauphin, visited him constantly during his last illness, which was rather a gradual sinking of nature than any decided malady. Brought up by him, accustomed to obey him, to confide in him, and to look upon him as a father, Louis XV., naturally, was much affected by the death of the aged cardinal; more so, probably, than by any other bereavement or occurrence of his life. He, for a long time, proposed to erect a monument to his memory, and was often engaged with Soufflot, the architect, in tracing designs for one. But as his sorrow subsided, his natural indolence and the pleasures of his dissolute court gradually effaced from his mind the memory of Fleury, and the proposed monument never was executed.

The Cardinal de Tencin, who owed his *barretta* to the Chevalier Saint-George, had expected to succeed to Fleury's post. But the king, in his last conversations with the cardinal-minister, had been counselled by him to take the reins of government into his own hands, and he resolved to follow his counsels. All the intrigues of Madame de Tencin and her friends, to

obtain for her brother the coveted appointment, proved ineffectual—the honorary title of minister, with a seat in the council chamber, but with neither portfolio nor emolument, was the limit of her success. De Tencin had bound himself, in return for his elevation to the cardinalate, to support the cause of the Pretender, and to urge on the king the invasion of England. Though without any real weight in the council, he could at least lift his voice in behalf of the Chevalier. He did so, and pleaded his cause so warmly that both king and council, apparently, were gained over to his views.

All that he asked was granted. As many vessels as Brest and Rochefort could muster and fit out were assembled to embark troops. The king declared war against England, and Prince Charles Edward left Rome to join the French and to put himself under the guidance of Maréchal de Saxe. These preparations, however, were actually made for a very different object from the ostensible one. The threatened descent on England concealed a real intention of invading Holland. The fleet put to sea, but neither England nor Holland could be reached. A violent storm arose—the ships were scattered; some were lost, others, much disabled, contrived to return to France. The expedition was at an end, for there was no other fleet to fit out, and the cardinal and his sister lamented together over their inability to evince, as they had proposed, their gratitude to the Chevalier—“But never mind!” exclaimed Richelieu, who found Madame de Tencin in tears. “We have at least shown him the attention.”

According to some writers, one of the most poignant sorrows of the old cardinal-minister's last days was

the prospect he saw of the evil influence of a mistress on the affairs of State. He had already been accused of jealousy of Madame de Vintimille. Death had removed her from his path, but in her successor, Madame de la Tournelle, he foresaw for the king even greater cause for alarm. The former was plain in feature, but lively, witty, and ambitious. The latter, from the imperiousness of her manner, had gained the name of "*la grande princesse.*" She was a young widow, very beautiful; ambitious of power, and lofty in her sentiments—being fond of heroes, and determined to make of Louis XV. a hero, and a rival to Maurice de Saxe, whom she especially admired.

As her sister was compared to Madame de la Vallière, so she, with as little reason, was likened to Agnes Sorel. It should rather have been Madame de Montespan. She had acquired so much influence over the king, by a system of artful coquetry, and an assumption of grand airs, that to gratify her, he seemed likely to become as prodigal as hitherto he had been parsimonious—prodigal of the public money, of course (now that there was no cardinal to remonstrate), not of his own private hoards, even for the beautiful Madame de la Tournelle. This lady was a *protégée* of the Duc de Gêvres—again high in favor—and the Duc de Richelieu, who had become the confidant of the king and his instructor in vice. To excite his curiosity, they made her beauty their constant theme of admiration, and arranged her introduction to him in a very singular and unusual manner.

She and her sister, Madame de Flavacourt, had been residing with their grandmother, the Duchesse de Mazarin, who dying at this time, and her hôtel being inherited by the Comte de Maurepas, the sisters

were compelled to seek another abode. The duchess having been *dame autour de la reine*, had an apartment at Versailles. Taking advantage of this, Madame de la Tournelle had the audacity, on leaving the Hôtel Maurepas—having concerted with her friends—to order her chair to be carried to Versailles when the king and his courtiers were taking the usual promenade on the terrace.\* She alighted in front of the palace, and dismissed her chair-men, to the great surprise of the *grandees* assembled there—de Gêvres and de Richelieu excepted. After greeting the lady, and conversing with her for a few minutes, the Duc de Gêvres announced to the king that this was the young and beautiful Madame de la Tournelle. That, driven from the home of her late relative, she had come to seek a temporary refuge in the duchess's apartment in the royal château.

The lady was then led forward and presented to the king by the Duc de Richelieu. His majesty saw that she was young and fair, and was almost as much charmed by the *naïveté* of her proceeding as with her beauty. "He rallied her on her enterprise," Soulavie tells us, and assigned her an apartment in the palace. He also gave shelter to Madame de Flavacourt under his hospitable roof. The simple Marie Leczinska received Madame de la Tournelle very kindly, and both she and her sister were added to the list of her ladies in waiting. But, alas for the king! the hand of the fair widow is sought by the handsome young Duc d'Aginois, to whose merits, she allows it to be known, she is by no means insensible. She keeps much to

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\* All the old usages and etiquette of the time of Louis XIV. were still rigidly kept up.

her apartments also; does not always accept the invitation—for she acknowledges no command—to share in the convivialities of the *petits-soupers* at Choisy. Her pretext is a very bad cold; so that the king enjoys but little of her society. When she does appear, she is usually so muffled up in an ample *coiffe*—being fearful of increasing her cold, or taking a fresh one in the draughty corridors of Versailles—that his majesty obtains but an occasional furtive glimpse of the beautiful face he longs to leisurely gaze on.

Carried on for months, this tantalizing system becomes wearisome. It is intimated to Madame de la Tournelle that she will do well to retire from the court. Then steps in the “mutual friend,”—the infamous debauchee—the Duc de Richelieu. He, now nearer fifty than forty, is the assiduous flatterer of the passions of the king. Honor suffers, no doubt; “but what matter?” as he would say, “favor is increased.”

The handsome d’Agenois may have a face as handsome as the king’s, but he has a remarkably light purse. He cannot transform Madame’s small estate of Chateauroux into a wide domain and a duchy, and add to its modest revenue eighty thousand *livres* yearly. That is a feat which the king performs. Also, he presents her with the royal letters or documents in which it is stated “we have created our well-beloved, etc., a duchess for her virtue and merit,” enclosed in a richly jewelled casket. All the girlish mischievousness she had hitherto assumed at once disappeared, and the same haughty defiant air adopted by the Marquise de Montespan towards the timid queen of Louis XIV. poor Marie Leczinska was compelled to tolerate in her lady of honor, the stately Duchesse de Chateauroux, now *maitresse-en-titre*.

Fleury's advice to the king to dispense with a first minister, and to take the duties of that office on himself, she warmly approved. But his indolence and indifference were so great that he would scarcely give himself the trouble even to attend to affairs left incomplete at the cardinal's death—"he does not seem to notice what takes place in his kingdom," writes Madame de Tencin, "but he amuses himself with directing a secret policy." "The king's secret" was no secret at all, and the aimlessness and futility of his so-called secret policy prevented it from greatly embarrassing his ministers in the conduct of public affairs. To certain propositions made to Louis XV. by Frederick of Prussia the duchess counselled him to accede. Having done so, she tossed aside his embroidery frame, commanded him to gird on his sword, and to equip himself for making the approaching campaign in Flanders.

What a sensation it caused at Versailles! Who shall describe the consternation, from the queen down to the most insignificant lackey—for the news spread with astonishing rapidity, from the *grand salon* to the scullery—when the Duc de Richelieu announced that Madame de Chateauroux had exacted from the king a promise to place himself at the head of his armies? That she should consent to separate herself from her lover was no less surprising than the unwonted energy of the king. It had not been understood that she, too, was going to the wars—though it was known that the mistresses of Louis XIV. had shared the dangers of that great warrior-hero's expeditions, and that in his triumphal progress through conquered lands "three queens" accompanied him. It was, however, ascertained at the ante-chamber the next morning

that the duchess also was going, after taking leave of the queen, and that the king would receive her at Epernay. "She was to fight at his side," said one report. "He had named her his aid-de-camp," said another. It was, indeed, a fertile theme, this going to the wars, for *bon-mots*, epigrams, and jests.

It appears, too, to have been almost a party of pleasure. Elegant carriages, filled with still more elegant ladies, thronged the roads leading to Nancy and Metz. The king had already performed prodigies of valor when Mdme. la Duchesse arrived, and, to celebrate the taking of a fortress at which he had assisted, a Te Deum was about to be said, or sung, in the Cathedral of Lille. The duchess arrived in her carriage. Men and women of rank and a crowd of young officers vied with each other in pressing forward to congratulate her. Presently arrived the king, to take part in the solemn thanksgiving. He was on horseback, and surrounded by a brilliant staff—booted and spurred, a clanking sword, a waving plume, and ah! so divinely handsome. Just, too, as the hero had ridden from the terrible field where his deeds of valor had been done, he entered the old stately cathedral.

Most considerately, his *prie-dieu* was placed immediately opposite the enclosed seat set apart for the duchess; as though that were the altar where he would most naturally desire to pay his vows and to find acceptance. "Radiantly happy she looked," we are told. A noble pride lighted up her beautiful face, and added lustre to her large dark eyes. For the wish of her heart was accomplished. She, at last, had a lover worthy of her—a lover who was both a hero and a king.

Amongst the gay throng that filled the cathedral,



and placed where a full view of the triumphant dame and her royal lover was obtained, there looked earnestly upon them a lady, elegantly dressed, young and fair as the duchess, and no less ambitious and unscrupulous, but infinitely more talented—it was Madame le Normand d'Étiolles. Her husband had brought her hither to see this fine show and “the pomp and circumstance of war.” But where was the queen? At home, praying in her oratory—poor simple-minded woman. She should have said her prayers at Lille.

Balls and *fêtes* followed the thanksgivings, and banquets too; for Soubise was there, with Marin and his subordinates and an army of scullions. The reviews were on a very grand scale. Bezenval says a hundred thousand men were there, besides the forty thousand comprising the army of reserve under the Maréchal de Saxe. The campaign opened with the siege of Ménin; the king, at first, as ardent and valorous as before; but suddenly, either from weariness or *ennui*, he seemed to lose all interest in the war, no longer showed himself to his army, and passed his time chiefly in the society of the duchess and her sister, Madame de Lauraguais. On the 8th of August, while a *Te Deum* was being sung for the successful besieging of Château-Dauphin, the king was taken ill. The next day malignant fever developed itself, and progressed rapidly. The Duc du Richelieu and Madame de Chateauroux affected to disbelieve that he was in danger, and allowed no one but themselves in his apartment.

The young Duc de Chartres, son of the pious Duc d'Orleans, forced the *consigne*, as representative of his father, first prince of the blood, who alone had the right to do so. With him was Fitz-James, Bishop of

Soissons. He explained to the king his danger; then confessed him, and, after Madame de Chateauroux, by his order, conveyed to her by Count d'Argenson, had been desired to leave Metz, gave him absolution and administered the last sacraments. The bishop was also authorized by Louis XV. to publicly express his regret for the flagrancy of his life, and the evil example he had set his people.

While the duchess was escaping from the threatened vengeance of the populace, in a carriage lent her by the Maréchal de Bellisle, Marie Leczinska and the dauphin were on their way to Metz; where they were received by the king, then convalescent, with every appearance of pleasure and affection. The news of his illness and danger had reached Paris in the middle of the night. The churches were opened, and the people arose from their beds and thronged to them to pray for his recovery. Their grief and distress were unbounded. Day and night eager crowds surrounded the houses of the ministers, hoping to learn that some change for the better had taken place. On the 14th the disease took a favorable turn, and a courier was the next day despatched to Paris with the news of his convalescence. Transports of delight hailed the news. The streets rang with the joyous cry, "Our king is well again." The courier who brought the welcome intelligence was carried in triumph through the city, and he and his horse were nearly suffocated by the kisses and embraces of the multitude, in the excitement of joy.

Louis speedily recovered, and, after the siege of Fribourg, returned to Paris. The ardent enthusiasm of the welcome he received momentarily affected him, and he asked—as well he might—"what he had done

to merit so much love." But "Le bien aimé," the surname with which he was from time to time distinguished, was not derived from the spontaneous cry of a devoted people, so much as from the gayly launched epithet—taken up and repeated by the almanacs—of one Vade, whom Voltaire calls "scoundrel." But all enthusiasm soon ceased. Louis was fearfully bored by it. It seemed to indicate an expectation on the part of his subjects that the evil example which, when the fear of death was before his eyes, he acknowledged he had set them was now to give place to a more reputable course of life. This was far from congenial to him, and he became cold and ceremonious in his behavior to the queen; evinced great repugnance towards the dauphin and covertly was seeking to renew his *liaison* with the duchess, whose "*bien aimé*" he alone cared to be.

She was assiduously playing sick-nurse to the young Duc d'Angenois, who had been wounded in the Italian campaign. For her royal lover she affected a supreme contempt that annoyed him excessively. The courtiers, perceiving where his inclinations lay, began to praise the firm and noble conduct of Madame de Chateauroux under the trying ordeal she had passed through at Metz. This gratified the king. Immediately, Maurepas, whom the duchess regarded as her enemy, was despatched with a letter, and further was charged to inform her, verbally, that "his majesty had no knowledge of what had occurred at Metz; that his esteem for her remained unchanged, and that he begged she would return to the court and resume her office of maid of honor to the queen." She appeared so well satisfied that she extended her hand towards Maurepas, who respectfully knelt and kissed

it. Later in the day, d'Argenson, who had delivered the order for her and her sister's retirement from Metz, appeared with a list of the courtiers and ministers enclosed in a letter from the king, requesting her to erase the names of those whom she would wish banished from the court. She obeyed. D'Argenson's name was the first. The next day she fell ill—perhaps from the excitement of her triumph—took to her bed, and, after an illness of a few weeks, died on the 4th of December, 1744.

Maurepas and d'Argenson were both suspected of poisoning the letters they were charged to convey to her. That Jesuit priests, commissioned by the confessors of the queen and the dauphin, had put arsenic in a box of *bonbons* the king was accustomed to send to her daily—and which were made by himself—was another mode of poisoning, as unlikely as the first, by which her death was accounted for.

The duchess was the second of the mistresses of Louis XV. who had died within a year or two of each other. "You know whether I have desired your glory," were her last words to him, when he visited her on her death-bed.

## CHAPTER XXV.

Luxurious Style of Living.—The King's First Campaign.—Marriage of the Dauphin.—An Effective Riding-Costume.—Presented at Versailles.—“Le Roi S'amuse.”—Throwing the Handkerchief.—An Invitation to Travel.—The Queen's Dame du Palais.—La Marquise de Pompadour.—The Royal Will and Pleasure.

DURING the ministry of Cardinal Fleury, economy was the order of the day in the royal household. The needs of the State and the financial embarrassments resulting from the “Système Law” had made retrenchment an absolute necessity, and the simple tastes and domestic habits of both king and queen had enabled them readily to conform to it. Many of the nobility, whose fortunes had suffered from the speculative mania, had been glad to avail themselves of the example of royalty, and, by curtailing superfluities, in some measure to retrieve their losses.

But very shortly after the death of the cardinal, a great and general development of luxury took place in the style of living, both amongst the courtiers of Versailles and the *beau monde* of Paris, as well as the rich *bourgeoisie*. The reins of power had fallen from the hands of a frugal minister into those of a favorite of high-flown sentiments and extravagant tastes, and with a fondness for pomp and parade. In the unusual lavishness of the king, in his gifts to this haughty dame, the courtiers, doubtless, saw the near

realization of their long-cherished hopes of a brilliant court, presided over by a powerful *maitresse-en-titre*, and at once prepared for the much-desired change—society, generally, following their example.

But had the Duchesse de Chateauroux lived, it is doubtful whether, with Louis' extremely indolent temperament and confirmed dislike of showing himself prominently in public, her dream of conducting her lover in triumph through the career of glory marked out for him would ever have been fulfilled. No less doubtful was the nation's endurance of a repetition of the vainglorious martial promenades and distantly viewed sieges that were so gratifying to the vanity of Louis XIV., and so disastrously ruinous to his subjects. In a domestic sense, the results of the king's first campaign had proved extremely annoying to him. It was not the death of the duchess—though he mourned her loss nearly a whole month—she might be worthily replaced from among the number of "court ladies" vying with each other to obtain the preference—but the intense dislike he had conceived for the dauphin, arising out of the scene at Metz.

Louis believed that he saw in him signs of joy; an assumption of airs of command, and ill-concealed delight at the prospect of shortly succeeding to the throne. The silly speech attributed to him when he first heard of his father's dangerous condition—"Poor people, whose only dependence is a child of my age," certainly sounds more like a lesson he had learnt for the occasion than the spontaneous utterance of a boy. But whichever it may have been, it was extremely displeasing and offensive to the king. The more so as it was diligently repeated by the

Jesuits, or queen's party, and greatly lauded, as giving promise of much thoughtfulness for his people in the expected youthful ruler of France. It was, however, received with a sneer by the courtiers, who preferred the rule of a king's mistress to the rule of the Jesuit priesthood. And of these two great evils which was the lesser it may have been difficult to decide.

The dauphin, at the time the king's life was despaired of at Metz (August, 1744), had not quite completed his fifteenth year. He was then betrothed to the Infanta, Maria Theresa, and in January following the marriage was solemnized. The city of Paris celebrated the auspicious event with great magnificence, and gave several balls and public *fêtes*. At one of the masked balls, Madame le Normand d'Étioules was present, unmasked. The king also was there, but disguised as a miller. As soon as he perceived the fair lady sitting alone on a sofa, he took a seat by her side, and, believing himself unrecognized, began, as he imagined, to mystify her by entering into a conversation respecting the royal hunt in the forest of Senart.

Madame d'Étioules was accustomed to attend these hunts; her husband's château being situated on the borders of the forest. As she invariably contrived, in the course of the hunt, to cross the king's path once or twice, she had been observed by Madame de Chateauroux; who, suspecting her object, bestowed glances on her would-be rival that surely would have annihilated her could they have taken the effect desired. Madame d'Étioules was distinguished amongst the ladies who joined the king's hunting-party for her skill as a horsewoman. She was extremely well mounted; had a fashionable hunting

equipage in attendance to convey her home, and was conspicuous for the elegance of her riding-dress. In accordance with the picturesque taste of that day, it was of velvet, of the full bright blue known as "*l'œil du roi*," and fastened with richly chased gold buttons. Her hat was of felt, of the same color, edged with gold cord, and adorned with a waving white plume. It was a highly effective costume, in the contrast of its color, with that of the surrounding foliage, and had not escaped the king's notice. He had spoken admiringly of it, as glimpses were caught of its graceful wearer flitting along the paths of the forest.

But the hunting-parties came to an end when Madame de Chateauroux carried off her hero to the wars. The beautiful Madame d'Étioles might then have faded out of his memory, if she had not already taken the precaution of persuading her husband to have her presented at Versailles by the Princesse de Conti. This *grande dame*, who was overwhelmed with debts, and was a devotee of the gambling-table, made her presentations a source of income. Ambitious ladies, who had no other means of approaching royalty, might make sure of securing the good offices of the princess, if they could afford to send her a valuable present that was readily convertible into cash. Its object was perfectly understood: it was a mere affair of "exchange for a presentation." If the applicant had been both liberal and judicious in the choice of an offering, the princess performed her part of the bargain with the best possible grace. In the case of Madame d'Étioles, she declared that she had the greatest satisfaction in presenting at Versailles one of the prettiest women in France.



Though the death of Madame de Chateauroux had occurred so recently, the attentions of the king to Madame d'Étioles had been already sufficiently marked to inspire jealousy and alarm in her husband. He was desperately in love with his wife, poor man. Her presentation at court opened no palace gates to him; but he was tortured with the suspicion that it had opened the doors of the *petits-appartements* to her.

Louis XV. was no stranger, then, to Madame d'Étioles when she met him in the ball-room of the Hôtel de Ville, though she did not immediately recognize him. But his voice, which he had not the power of disguising, always betrayed him, and few persons were present to whom the jovial miller's identity was a mystery, while he fancied his disguise perfect. The lady, however, was discreet, and after a little lively *badinage* joined the dancers; dropping her handkerchief, perhaps designedly, as she rose from her seat. The king picked it up, and for awhile appeared undecided what to do with it. At last, suddenly, as it seemed, a bright thought occurred to him, and, crossing the ball-room, he presented the handkerchief to Madame d'Étioles, with a very low bow, and, as reported, a very gallant compliment, though it reached only the ears for which it was intended.

“He has thrown the handkerchief! He has thrown the handkerchief!” exclaimed the masks, grouping around him, and taking advantage of their own and the king's disguise to pester him with piquant witticisms, and sarcastic remarks on the excellence of his taste. This induced his majesty to beat a retreat, and exchange the dusty miller costume for a Turkish one; which would have been more appropriate had he worn it before the ceremony of throwing the handkerchief.

What a fine theme for the *salons*, this so-called "throwing the handkerchief"! For all Paris and Versailles knew the next day of the king's public "act of graciousness" towards the beautiful Madame d'Étioles.

"Handsome if you like, but *bourgeoise* nevertheless," exclaimed Madame de Tencin, who had been one of the intimates of Madame de Chateauroux, and who, now getting into years, had become very severe in her strictures on "the loose morals of these *bourgeoises* ladies," who presumed to follow the vicious example of their betters. Perceiving the designs of Madame d'Étioles on the king, Madame de Tencin had for some time made it a point of conscience sedulously to endeavor to thwart them.

"She is a presumptuous *bourgeoise*," cries another indignant marquise or comtesse, who cannot, or who will not, believe that the much-coveted distinction of succeeding Madame de Chateauroux can possibly be conferred on any but a lady of the higher nobility. Yet, on the very evening that the incident of the handkerchief took place, there were far-seeing courtiers and court ladies also, at the ball, who bestowed the most gracious of smiles and flattering compliments on the lady whom the king had delighted to honor.

A very different view, however, was taken of the honor paid to his wife by M. le Normand d'Étioles. When it came to his ears, "he made," we learn, "a frightful uproar;" threatened to shut up Madame, and to appeal to the Parliament against the tyranny of the king in destroying the peace and happiness of families by his dissolute life. The result of this outspoken indignation was the rescue of his wife from the seclusion with which he had threatened her, and

an invitation to himself to travel. He was free to choose in what direction—England, Italy, or elsewhere. He had but to name the country, and the Mousquetaires of M. le Lieutenant would have the honor of escorting him to the frontier. He chose Italy. But exile did not silence his tongue. He continued to inveigh, in no measured terms, against the character and conduct of the king, until a communication from the Papal government bade him cease, or take the consequences of his folly.

Madame d'Étioles, in the mean time, was successfully installed at Versailles. One of the *dames du palais* having resigned, the king desired that she should succeed to the vacant post. Poor Marie Leczinska ventured mildly to oppose it, and proposed a candidate of her own. The king replied that the lady was not of the required rank. The queen retorted that she was certainly of much higher birth than Madame d'Étioles. But Louis XV. did not choose to argue the point. He silenced the queen as it was customary with him to silence all opposition to his wishes. "*Je le veux,*" he said with a very determined air; and accordingly the new favorite was presented to the queen, again by the Princesse de Conti, as one of her ladies of the palace, and an apartment assigned her. Madame d'Étioles was on this occasion, as, indeed, she is said always to have been, highly respectful in her manner towards the queen, who, expecting another haughty Madame de Chateauroux,\* was surprised at

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\* Full of superstition, and with a great fear of ghosts, Marie Leczinska, when she heard of the death of the Duchesse de Chateauroux at Versailles (where it was not etiquette for any but royal personages to die), became timid and alarmed at nightfall, in expectation of a ghostly visit from the deceased. An old

the change, and received La Marquise de Pompadour not only with less repugnance, but, for a time, with some show of favor.

The king had raised Madame d'Etioles to the needful rank by conferring on her the title of the extinct noble family of De Pompadour, whose arms she also assumed on receiving a considerable portion of the estates. From this time her favor increased; and gradually Madame de Pompadour took upon herself the office of first minister—ruling France as Fleury had done, though with less satisfaction to the nation, by humoring and amusing the king.

From her position with reference to Louis XV., she naturally experienced more difficulty than the cardinal in maintaining that rule. All on whom places or pensions were not bestowed became her enemies. The aristocratic society of France, of the middle of the eighteenth century, were far too thoroughly corrupt to take any moral objection to the dispensing of court favors being placed in the hands of the king's mistress. The only indignity they saw in it was that the lady promoted to that honor was not of noble birth, not one of their noble selves. But the monarch had declared it was his royal will and pleasure that thus it should be, and that "after him might come the deluge;" so the courtiers, for the most part, were content to bow down and lick the dust of the feet of the Marquise de Pompadour.

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Polish nurse, who had accompanied her to France, and to whom she imparted her fears, bade her be of good comfort. "She will do in the spirit," she said, "what she did in the flesh—prefer the king's apartments to your majesty's. So let her wander at her will."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

“Un Dégoût Rhubarbatif.”—Jeanne Antoinette Poisson.—Etiquette of the Old Régime.—Jeanne's Father.—Pretty and Beautiful.—Marriage of Mdlle. Poisson.—Mdme. d'Étioles in Society.—Cleopatra and the Asp.—Highly Promoted.—The Bourgeoisie of Paris.—Street Lamps.—Evening Promenading.

THE history of Madame de Pompadour has been variously related. She has been greatly exalted and greatly debased, the object of extravagant praise and no less extravagant invective. “Educated by a corrupt mother to corrupt a king born religious,” are the opening words of Soulavie's *Mémoires*; and exceedingly ridiculous they are. For if Louis XV. really was “born religious,” it is very certain that he had entirely lost this innate gift of religion by the time he attained his thirty-fifth year, when he first became subject to the influence of Madame de Pompadour. The work of corruption was surely well-nigh completed under the reign of the four sisters De Nesle, and “*Le bien aimé*” was now a prey to *ennui*, and sometimes to fits of remorse so profound that life seemed a burden to him. His tapestry, his amateur cookery, his turning and delving, and other undignified and puerile pursuits, had all lost their charm, while a certain restlessness of spirit gave him “*un dégoût rhubarbatif*” for everything and everybody under the sun.

He sighed for new amusements, new pleasures; and had Madame de Chateauroux been spared to him, he

possibly might soon have been sighing for new worlds to conquer. But, as it was, when he met Madame de Pompadour, he was like a fish out of water—if so humble a simile be permitted. From the age of five to thirty-three he had been under the guidance of his preceptor, and for at least eight or nine years had discovered no beauty that could compete with that of the queen. His preceptor was dead, and his queen, chiefly by her own fault, was no longer his queen of beauty. She had tamely yielded her legitimate influence to others. Those others having also disappeared from the stage of life, Madame de Pompadour, or rather Madame d'Étiolles, then appears prominently on the scene, ambitious of taking the sceptre of France from the feeble hands of the king.

At the age of three years and a half, Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, it appears, went with her mother and nurse to the house of M. Pâris-Duvernay, to see the marriage procession of the king and queen. It was not a very diverting spectacle for so young a child, and little Jeanne having expressed some impatience was quieted by: "Look, my child, see the king, the handsome young king, he is going to be married." This seems to have made an impression on the youthful mind of Mdlle. Jeanne; for when her nurse was about to take her in her arms to return home, the child resisted, clung to the window, and cried lustily.

"Why, what is the matter, my little Jeanne?" inquires the nurse.

"I want to be married, and I'm waiting for the king," murmurs the child, her eyes streaming with tears.

"Oh! what a pretty little wife for the king," exclaims her mother, laughingly.

Thus is this phrase, apparently a standing joke in the family, accounted for, in letters attributed to Madame de Pompadour. And it is as likely to be true as the disagreeable origin elsewhere given to it, in some few memoirs of the period, not generally trustworthy. That she was brought up from childhood with the view of her becoming the king's mistress is difficult to believe. For it should be remembered that the rigid class distinctions of the old *régime* were still in full force at Versailles; and that the halo of divinity which surrounded and hedged in the king was not yet so dimmed that a family of the *petite bourgeoisie* would presume to bring up a daughter with the view of her filling a post to which only the daughters of nobles could pretend. Besides, the king gave no indications, either then or for many years after, of sinking into a miserable debauchee, as he eventually became.

From the letters of Mdlle. Aïssé, which probably are authentic, the writer, after deprecating, with her usual sentimentality, the scandals she so evidently loves to dwell upon, says: "Though these things are done in the face of the sun, yet the court is a pious one; and the manners of the two heads of the state (Fleury and the king) very severe. They are irreproachable except on the score of morality."

Jeanne's father was second-clerk in the commissariat department, an appointment he owed to one of the brothers Pâris. Like too many others, he was afflicted with the mania for gambling, and as he was more frequently a loser than a gainer, and his means also were small, his family was often reduced to great straits. This led to defalcations, or embezzlement of some sort, which compelled him secret-

ly to leave France. He was tried in his absence, and condemned to be hanged. Not being forthcoming, he was hanged in effigy, and the whole of his goods were seized by his creditors, leaving his wife and young son and daughter destitute.

For some time both brother and sister had been educated at the expense of M. le Normand Tournehem. By his liberality Jeanne was not only taught engraving, that she might have an occupation that would secure her, if needed, a livelihood, but also instructed, by the best masters obtainable, in vocal and instrumental music; in the then fashionable accomplishments of dancing and drawing; in languages, and so forth. Great natural intelligence aiding these educational advantages, Jeanne Antoinette Poisson was a far more highly endowed young lady than most of the daughters of nobles with whom, while pursuing her studies, she sometimes came in contact; though "the difference in rank" forbade any approach to intimacy.

Until about her fifteenth year she was so extremely thin that, except in grace of movement, she gave no promise of becoming "the most beautiful woman of the capital." "There was in her countenance," says even one who delights to heap obloquy upon her, "a most attractive blending of vivacity and tenderness. It was a countenance that might be called both pretty and beautiful. To her personal graces was added the charm of her many accomplishments; and the thorough instruction she had received imparted great interest to her conversation." "A certain art of *badinage*" which she possessed in perfection, and which, though lively and piquant, was refined in tone, highly delighted and amused the distinguished circle



of wits, men of letters, and members of the *beau monde* who filled her *salon* when she became Madame le Normand d'Étioles.

She was then between eighteen and nineteen. M. le Normand Tournehem—a man of good family, and one of the farmers-general, therefore rich—had proposed to leave her the half of his property. But his nephew having fallen deeply in love with her, a marriage was arranged, by which eventually she was to succeed to the whole of the uncle's fortune. The consent of the young man's father was reluctantly given. The daughter of a man who had been hanged in effigy, and who, until recently (interest having been made to set aside this disgraceful sentence for the lesser one of banishment), dared not return to France lest he should undergo that process in person, was not, he considered, a very desirable match. But he yielded to the infatuation of his son and the wishes of his brother, M. le Normand Tournehem. Most unfortunately, the young lady had no love for her husband. So far as she was concerned, it was one of those conventional French marriages in which love is not even a secondary consideration, though affection and happiness often result from them; but in this instance the bridegroom was deeply in love.

“With ample means at command, and gifts, natural and acquired, such as hers,” remarks M. Bungener, “she might have taken a very high place in society, and would have played a brilliant part in the world, had she never approached the steps of the throne.” She was of the sect of the philosophers, of course; being on terms of friendly intimacy with Voltaire, who sometimes sojourned for a week or ten days together at the Château d'Étioles, where he wrote

some portion of his "Histoire Générale" and his "Charles XII.;" also, as historiographer of France, the account of the king's first campaign in Flanders, from the reports transmitted to him by M. d'Argenson. With Voltaire she was received at Sceaux, where some dramatic bagatelles he had written for the duchess's theatre were performed. While there they heard of the death of Cardinal Fleury, whom she had once met in the *salon* of Madame de Carignan, and again at a supper at Madame de Tencin's, where his particular notice of her seems to have been rather displeasing to the hostess.

Both before and after her marriage she frequented the best literary *salons*—the brilliant artistic and philosophic receptions of the moralist Vauvenargues, at the Hôtel de Tours; and the grave and learned circle of M. de Chenevières. Crébillon and Voltaire were then not only at peace, but, apparently, there was friendship between them. The next year there was war to the knife.

It was at a reception at the house of M. de Chenevières that Madame d'Étioles first met Marmontel; then very young, and but recently arrived from Toulouse with a great provincial literary reputation. With M. d'Étioles she attended the first representation of his tragedy of "Cleopatra." It appears that the theatre was crowded even more than was usual on such occasions, the doors being besieged by an anxious crowd long before the time for admission. This intense interest was due less to the new play and the great actress, Mdlle. Clairon, who played the heroine, than to a mechanical asp, made by the mechanic Vaucanson, and which, held in the hand of Cleopatra, represented all the movements of a live reptile.

The illusion was perfect. But while watching the twisting and turning of the creature, both author and actress were but little attended to. The mechanical triumph of M. Vaucanson proved, indeed, so prejudicial to their success that it had to be abandoned.

Marmontel was afterwards one of Madame de Pompadour's *protégés*, and, generally, rising young artists and literary men found in her an enlightened appreciation of their talents and productions. The *salon* of Madame d'Étioles would doubtless have become the most brilliant and distinguished of the period, as she was, herself, the most remarkably talented, gifted, and beautiful woman of her day, had not want of moral principles, and an intense love of power, led her to seek the gratification of her ambitious views in the much-envied position of the king's recognized mistress. To speak of it as a disreputable position is to judge it by a different standard of morality from that which prevailed at the period. For the elevation, as it was termed, of Madame d'Étioles shocked only because it was the first instance of *une dame bourgeoise*, or lady of the middle class, having been so "highly promoted," and accordingly it was resented as one of the social innovations of that innovating age on the privileges of the nobles, and a breach of the etiquette of the old *régime*. But when Madame de Pompadour took up the sceptre of France, she was fully impressed by the idea that her reign would be a long one. She had the tact, or the art, to impress the same conviction on others; and thus secured, as her partisans, all who were ambitious and who sought court favor; without which the road to distinction was then closed to most persons. To assist at the toilet of La Marquise de Pompadour was soon, therefore, a favor

more eagerly desired than to assist at the *petit lever* of the king.

The court became more brilliant, the *salons* more animated from the time of her accession to power. The change which French society had for some years been gradually undergoing seemed to have derived from that event a fresh impulse. The middle class rapidly rose in importance, while the *prestige* of the nobility declined. It was owing, however, rather to the flourishing state of French commerce, which, almost extinct when Louis XV. came of age, had been fostered and renewed under the peaceful policy and economical administration of Fleury. The class in whose hands lay the wealth of the country now claimed consideration where, hitherto, it had, at best, been but tolerated; while the great and increasing spread of the new philosophism tended towards the levelling of social inequalities, and the depriving the *gentilhomme* of his long-enjoyed privilege of contemning and insulting the *bourgeois*.

Barbier records in his journal (1745) that "the *bourgeoisie* of Paris," meaning the trading and shop-keeping section, "are no longer content with their station—that they, in fact, know not their place," since they have been permitted with impunity not only to abandon the characteristic dress prescribed by Richelieu, to mark the line of separation between them and the upper ranks of society, but also to resume the use of gold, silver, and jewels, forbidden under the regency. Another French writer observes that, in a country where wealth, without noble descent, had never yet obtained social consideration, the *parvenu millionaire* was now courted and honored far more

than the needy *gentilhomme*, though he could prove the nobility of his family for seventeen generations.

Trade was prosperous; and men engaged in it had been quietly laying by money while the upper *bourgeoisie* and the nobles had been squandering it. The small dark shops, which hitherto had served for the needs of the Parisians, were abandoned for more commodious ones, with superior dwelling accommodation. The introduction, at this time, of the street lamps made Paris a brilliantly lighted city, compared with its previous gloom after nightfall. It induced, also, the lighting up of shops, and favored the now general custom of promenading on the Boulevards in the evening—a recreation to which all classes were devoted. Ladies, as well as gentlemen, made use of walking-canes—the *bourgeoise* presuming also to follow this fashion; just as at home she carried her snuff-box or *bonbonnière*, and flaunted in silk attire, with a wide-spreading *panier*, and jewels and lace, with as grand an air as any marquise or duchesse.

The various trades no longer congregated each in its own distinct street, but were located indiscriminately in different parts of the city. The most thriving of the shopkeepers began to have their country seats in the suburbs, and shopmen were employed where, heretofore, wives and daughters attended in the business. "Now they have their weekly receptions," says Mercier; "take their tea and coffee; disdain tallow candles, and, like their betters, burn wax-lights and set out their card-tables for the evening."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

Le Maréchal de Saxe.—The Dauphin's Baptism of Fire.—M<sup>de</sup>. de Pompadour at the Wars.—Her Heart grew Faint.—A Revulsion of Feeling.—“Oh, saddle White Surrey!”—Mars and Venus.—Scenes of the War.—Le Poème de Fontenoy.—Eve of the Battle of Rocoux.—The Baggage of War.—Living en Bourgeois.—Bravery and its Rewards.—A Soldier of Fortune.

FOLLOWING the example of Madame de Chateauroux, Madame de Pompadour, with more successful results, had prevailed on the king to rejoin the army in Flanders; to complete, as she flatteringly observed, his series of conquests, interrupted by the *contretemps* of his illness at Metz. The Maréchal de Saxe had already left Paris to resume the chief command of the French armies, though suffering greatly from languor and weakness; his health being seriously undermined by the excesses of a dissolute life. But his great flow of spirits, his courage and martial ardor, sustained him on this trying occasion. To Voltaire's question “what he could do in such a feeble condition,” the Maréchal replied, “it was not a question of living, but of setting out.”

Yet he was often compelled to dismount while giving his orders for the disposition of the troops in action, and to repose in a litter of wicker-work, which served him both for a carriage and a bed. He was a very great soldier, undoubtedly, this son of the beautiful Aurora von Königsmark. His qualities, as such,

were generally acknowledged by the officers of the French army, whose most distinguished generals served under him; the more readily, it may be, that he was not a Frenchman. He was now, with a very numerous force, investing the strong citadel of Tournai—considered one of the *chefs-d'œuvre* of Vauban's system of fortification. A battle seemed imminent, and the king being informed of it, yielded to the suggestions of his beautiful mistress, that he should kindle fresh valor in his troops by showing himself at the head of his armies.

Once more, then, the royal hero dons his plumed helmet, and girds on his valiant sword; and, accompanied by a numerous retinue and brilliant staff, sets out for Flanders, amidst the enthusiastic acclamations of the Parisian people. On the 6th of May he arrived at Douai, whence, on the following day, he proceeded to Pontachin, to reconnoitre with his generals, the neighborhood of the expected battle-field. The reception of "*Le bien aimé*" by his troops might have gladdened the heart of Henri IV.; and the *vivas* loud and long, repeated from rank to rank, may momentarily have gratified Louis XV., though these public ovations usually rather annoyed than pleased him.

The dauphin on this occasion also visited the armies, to receive his baptism of fire. The relations between Louis and his son were frigid in the extreme. Yet the latter appears to have been most respectful in his behavior towards the king, never presuming on his rank, but attending the *petit lever* with the officers of his corps—allowing those of higher grade to enter before him, and mounting guard at the royal headquarters simply as captain of his regiment of "the dauphin's gendarmes and light-horse." He conducted

himself also with as much bravery as could be expected in a youth yet scarcely sixteen, and who, moreover, was restrained from seeking any post of real danger. A little ostentatious piety, in the publicity with which he performed his devotions—at the instance indeed of his Jesuit confessor, who was glad to offer, in the face of the armies, this annoyance to the king—was all that could well be complained of.

Madame de Pompadour had solicited and obtained permission to join the king at the camp of the *Maréchal de Saxe*. She did not, however, like Madame de Chateauroux, take a formal leave of the queen, but decamped without beat of drum with the minister of war, *Comte d'Argenson*, to whom the king had given leave to offer her a seat in his carriage. Two days before the battle they arrived in the neighborhood of *Tournai*. *D'Argenson* immediately proceeded to the king's head-quarters, leaving Madame at a place of safety near *Antoin*.

What anxious fears filled her breast during those forty-eight hours! How, at any moment, some unexpected turn of fortune might wrest the sceptre of France from her hand ere she had firmly grasped it! And when the day of the contest came, and the roar of the cannon reached her ears, and the din of battle was borne on the breeze in fitful and confused sounds, how she trembled! The star of her fortunes seemed to pale, and her ambitious hopes to be crushed in the bud, as she listened to the thunder of war. "Her heart grew faint, as though 'twould die within her."

But her anxiety was not for her hero's life; she knew that he was safe enough out of harm's way. But, ah! should the battle go against him—and *Maurice de Saxe* was more famous for his retreats than



his victories—what might be the consequence to her? The king had remarked that “since the days of Saint Louis no king of France had gained any signal victory over the English.” It is against an English army, led by the impetuous young Duke of Cumberland, that the army of France is now fighting. The victory depends on good generalship—and whatever his sufferings, Maurice de Saxe may be depended on for that—not, as in these degenerate days, on the possession of the most murderous weapons, when, after remorselessly mowing down thousands with their “monster guns,” pious emperors and kings send telegrams to wives and mistresses with the news that “God hath blessed them with victory”—God being in these civilized times on the side of the latest diabolical inventions, as formerly He was said to favor the biggest battalions. Oh for the days when, as the old song says, “They who make the quarrel may be the only men to fight”!

But we have wandered from the village of Antoin, where we left the beautiful marquise a prey to anxious thought. She looks forth from her chamber window, her face is pale, her eye is haggard; she wonders why his charger or his chariot is so long in coming. But in the distance she espies a horseman, another, and again another. They ride as only aides-de-camp ride, even at reviews—as if for their very lives. The *Maréchal Comte d’Estrées* brings a message from the king to the *Marquise de Pompadour*, with the news of the victory of *Fontenoy*. The *maréchal* tells of the prodigies of valor performed by the king, of the terrible risks he has run; of his hairbreadth escapes, and the courage, always so conspicuous in the Bourbon race, of which he has given such startling proofs.

What a revulsion of feeling this news occasions ! Despondency had begun to cast its dark shadow o'er the agitated mind of the marquise; now it is dispelled by the bright gleams of triumph, and, in the excess of her joy, she resolves to ride over, personally to congratulate her hero, to the village of Fontenoy. There, the maréchal informs her, the king may yet be found. "Oh, saddle White Surrey!" She cannot wait until the cumbrous carriage, with all its fine trappings, is got ready. Her horse is brought forth; lightly she mounts it, and outstrips in speed the maréchal and his aides-de-camp, stopping once in the forest of Barri to gather a branch of oak.

The king—with the dauphin, the Maréchal de Saxe, the Duc de Richelieu (the king's aide-de-camp), the Duc de Penthièvre ("notre Toulouse"), and the Prince de Soubise (whose tent was a sort of *restaurant* during the campaign), and other staff officers—was entering the forest of Barri, when the marquise was seen approaching from the opposite side. Louis immediately recognized his ladylove, and, descending as she rode up, assisted her himself to dismount—she taking that opportunity of fastening the branch of oak in his helmet. Following the example of the king, the whole of his brilliant military escort alighted to receive the fair Marquise de Pompadour. The flush of excitement heightened the natural bloom of her cheek, and gratified ambition shone in her lustrous dark eyes, as their proud glance rested on the imposing spectacle before her. The king (whom, if she did not love, she may have admired as she would the Apollo Belvedere) was then in the full vigor of manly beauty. As he stood there, with plumed casque in hand, surrounded by the most distinguished generals of the age, and

crowned with the laurels of victory, fresh from the battle-field, the overwrought imagination of an ambitious-minded woman might regard the gay pageant as typical of France, her ruler, and her armies, bowing before her—a dream that, not long after, was literally fulfilled.

This meeting of Mars and Venus in the forest of Barri must have been a very pretty scene, and shed an air of romance on Fontenoy. It served to distract the mind from the horrors of war (for fourteen thousand men lay dead on the plain where that desperate battle had been fought), and the king immediately before had been moralizing on the subject for the benefit of his son. The dauphin, in his turn, might afterwards have moralized on the scene in the forest of Barri, for the benefit of his father, as he stood bare-headed before his mistress. Neither in youth nor manhood was the dauphin an attractive personage. He was the slave of Jesuit priests, and displayed but little intelligence and no great amiability. But to witness the deference, the honor, so publicly paid to his mother's rival, and in which he was himself obliged to take part, must have been mortifying and painful indeed.

While compliments and felicitations were being exchanged, two soldiers of the French Guard arrived, bearing a litter, on which was extended the body of the Duc de Grammont. Suddenly struck down by a random shot, he had begged that he might see, and bid adieu to, the king before he died. But life was found to be extinct when he reached the royal presence. What a sight for the pretty marquise! Happily, however, her nerves were stronger than was considered quite correct in those days, so that, although

anxious eyes were upon her, she felt no inclination to faint. So far from it, that perceiving M. Du Guesclin propped up against a tree, where he was waiting the arrival of a surgeon—his leg having been shattered by a spent ball—she hastened, as a sister of mercy, to afford him, while awaiting a more skilful hand, such relief as she was able—dressing and binding up his wounds with her handkerchief and portions of cambric and lace torn from her dress. The king and all present were, naturally, enchanted—even the dauphin smiled kindly upon her.

On the following day there was a solemn *Te Deum*, and a general salvo of the army—all was “Joy, glory, and tenderness,” as d’Argenson wrote to Voltaire. Three days after the battle arrived Voltaire’s “*Poème de Fontenoy*,” of which thirty thousand copies were distributed amongst the army. He is said to have written it in a single day; but, doubtless, it was prepared beforehand, and awaited only d’Argenson’s reports of the battle to impart to it certain touches of *vraisemblance*.

Fontenoy was an important victory to France. Ten days after it Tournai surrendered, which led to the conquest of the whole of the Austrian Netherlands. The king made a triumphal entry into Tournai, and after visiting other places in Flanders, returned with Madame de Pompadour to Paris, early in September, 1745.

The battle of Rocoux brought the campaign to an end. It was fought on the 11th of October, and was generally considered as a mere wanton destruction of human life. For though victory remained with the French, neither side lost nor gained territory or other advantage by it. The *Maréchal de Saxe*, supposed to

be dying at the opening of the campaign, seemed to revive and to gain renewed strength as victory followed victory. Yet even he appeared to be by no means elated by the victory of Rocoux, but rather oppressed by so great and unnecessary an effusion of blood. It was his custom to have a company of actors in his suite, to amuse the soldiers, and to keep up their spirits when not in action. On the eve of the battle of Rocoux, the play was thus announced:

“To-morrow there will be no performance, on account of the *maréchal* intending to give battle. The day after to-morrow we shall have the honor of playing before you ‘The Village Chanticleer’ and ‘Rhadamiste.’”

Yet the *maréchal*, though thus seemingly assured of victory, was not in his usual spirits; for with the presentiment of success, he foresaw also the terrible carnage that would ensue. The Marquis de Fénélon, nephew of the great Archbishop of Cambrai, was among the slain in that sanguinary contest. He was shot down in the intrenchments.

After the battle the army went into winter quarters, and the *Maréchal de Saxe* returned to Paris, to participate in the *fêtes* with which the Hôtel de Ville and the Parisian people celebrated the return of the king and the successes of the campaign in Flanders. It was scarcely possible to exceed in enthusiasm the demonstrations of joy of the preceding year. Yet the results of the campaign were more important. The monarch then returned to his people raised, as by a miracle, from the bed of death. Now he came back to them as a conqueror, bearing the palm of victory, and with the reputation, more or less merited, of a valiant soldier.

There were murmurings, it is true—or, amongst the more lenient of “the well-beloved’s” good people of Paris, expressions of regret—that again he should have deemed a mistress a necessary part of the baggage of war. The custom was, however, an old one, though it would, of course, have been more honored in the breach than the observance. “The beautiful Gabrielle” graced the guerilla camp of the gallant and brave Henri IV. The tearful La Valliere and the haughty Montespan graced the glass coach of his godship, Louis XIV., when he took a trip to the wars, and sought glory within ear-shot of the roar of the cannon. A *maîtresse-en-titre* was, in fact, then regarded as one of the indispensable trappings of royalty, as also, under the less high-sounding appellation of “*amie intime*,” of every great noble and gentleman of fortune, who rightly considered what was due to his rank and station.

If the honest *bourgeois* but very rarely followed this social custom, it was because, on the one hand, it was looked upon as an especial privilege of his betters; on the other, that few cared to incur so superfluous an expense, entailing also an inconvenient interference with *bourgeois* habits. Hence the phrase “they live *en bourgeois*” applied to those who lived respectably and happily, and respected the ties of marriage and of family. The murmurings against Louis XV. for doing only as his predecessors, in that respect, had done arose, then, not from considerations of morality, but chiefly out of the financial condition of the country; which, but recently rescued by strict economy from the very verge of bankruptcy, was again menaced with distress—no less by the extravagance of the king’s mistresses than by the heavy expenses of the war.

In addition to the legitimate cost of war, which fell as a burdensome tax on the people, there had arisen the pernicious custom of conferring large pecuniary rewards on all officers, of any rank, who had witnessed or taken part in an action. The nation had degenerated. The French officer cared so little for his country that nothing spurred him on to be brave in its defence but the expectation of being largely paid for it. All came forward at the end of the campaign with complaints of detriment to their fortune by absence at the war, and a claim for compensation. Once upon a time, to be decorated with the cross of Saint-Louis was the most coveted reward of the brave and gallant soldier—now little was thought of it—“They have fastened to my buttonhole,” said a lieutenant of grenadiers, “the sign of my courage, but they have forgotten the price of my valor.”

“Misery, misery,” cried the *grandees* who had held all the chief commands, “misery, misery,” while indulging in every extravagance and luxury. The rank and file who had done all the fighting were, however, rewarded with their *congé*, and permission to seek a subsistence wherever they could find it, or to be content to starve. Fleury might well dread war; he knew that the military chiefs were inexorable creditors, rating their doubtful services exorbitantly high, and demanding prompt payment in ready money, with which the coffers of France were rarely overflowing.

The parsimony of Louis XV. was proverbial when his own private purse was concerned; but he did not object to liberality when the nation provided the funds. The successes of the campaign in Flanders were owing chiefly to the *Maréchal de Saxe*; and the king, in acknowledgment of his services, conferred on

him the title of Comte de Saxe, and the post of *Maréchal-Général* of the armies of France. He presented him also with six of the cannon taken at Rocoux, to place in front of the *Château de Chambord*, which, with its wide domain and dependencies—furnishing a revenue of between seven and eight millions of francs—he presented as a gift to the Saxon hero; adding to this princely donation a pension of forty thousand francs. Maurice de Saxe was indeed a fortunate soldier of fortune.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

“La Reine de Navarre.”—“Le Temple de la Gloire.”—“Is Trajan satisfied?”—The King's Petits-Soupers.—The King's Morals in Danger.—Horace, Virgil, and Voltaire.—Jealousy of Piron.—The Laurel Crown of Glory.—Les Modes Pompadour.—An Evening with the Queen.—The Queen and the Maréchal.—“Ora pro Nobis.”—M. de Saxe Caught Napping.—The Illustrious Mouthier.—La Marquise Bourgeoise.—Stately Politeness.—The Old Régime.

A VERY brilliant season, both at Paris and Versailles, followed the military successes of France. Religious dissensions, parliamentary quarrels, all were forgotten in the general joy. Even the severity of the Jansenists relaxed, and the scruples of the Jesuits gave way, before a nation's enthusiasm. With all classes, *fêtes* and rejoicings formed the chief business of the hour. Had Louis XV. been the god of war in person, greater adulation could not have been paid him. His flatterers found language wanting in words of sufficient force of meaning to convey an idea of the royal warrior's feats of arms, or to express their own great admiration of his prowess.

Such incense would have seemed natural, and been acceptable, offered to Louis XIV.; to his successor it gave no satisfaction whatever. The times were changed; already the old *régime* had begun to totter. This extravagant praise and fulsome flattery had now more the air of mockery than of compliment, and the

excitement of war having passed away, Louis would infallibly have sunk back to the apathy and gloom habitual to him, with intervals of tapestry and cookery, had not Madame de Pompadour come to the rescue. It was at this time that she introduced scenic representations at Versailles, and formed her company of comedians and dancers—all men of rank, and all happy to obey the favorite's slightest behest.

The *petite opéra* of "La Reine de Navarre" had been produced by Voltaire for the marriage *fêtes* of the dauphin. At its first representation it had met with the general approval of the court; and great ladies intrigued for the principal *rôles*, thinking to fascinate the king. But Madame, with her musical attainments and terpsichorean graces, of course reserved for herself the parts for *prima donna* and *première danseuse*. Voltaire, it appears, rather coveted the post of stage-manager, but the lady preferred in this, as in more important affairs, to retain the management in her own hands. It was afterwards remarked that the poet had not been judicious in his choice of a subject, yet the king was so well pleased with the piece that it procured for Voltaire—at the instance, however, of Madame de Pompadour—the appointment of Gentleman of the Bed-chamber. He was now requested to write a similar piece, the subject having reference to the war, for a proposed *fête* at Versailles. The result was "Le Temple de la Gloire," with a prologue, after the manner of Metastasio's productions. It was set to music by Rameau, who had composed the dances and songs of the "Reine de Navarre," and was performed in the *petits appartements*. In the opening of the piece, Trajan (Louis XV.) was seen giving peace to Europe, and the Temple of Glory afterwards open-

ing to receive him. Voltaire had obtained permission to be present at its first representation. It was extremely well received. But the vanity of the poet led to a breach of etiquette on his part that gave great offence to Trajan.

It was utterly contrary to the usage of the court to address the king. But when he was leaving the theatre, Voltaire, throwing himself in his way, exclaimed, "Is Trajan satisfied?" This caused a momentary interruption to the progress of the king and his retinue; but a look of astonishment and indignation, that would have fallen as a thunderbolt on a less dauntless intruder, was the only reply vouchsafed. Madame de Pompadour, desirous of soothing the wounded *amour-propre* of her poet-friend, prevailed on the king to allow the offence to pass unnoticed; assuring him that irrepressible admiration of his majesty's valor, not presumption, had occasioned it. Further to console him for the severity of the rebuke, there was confided to him the drawing up of a manifesto, which it was intended to publish when the projected descent on England should be made, to assist the vain efforts of the young Pretender, then in Scotland, to gain possession of the English throne. The defeat at Culloden put an end to this project.

But Voltaire was as little disposed to evince gratitude for such a commission, as to display any mortification—whatever he might feel—at the rebuff he had received. Louis XV. had made an enemy of one of whom Madame de Pompadour—flattering his weaknesses—would have made a partisan. For she fully appreciated the talents of Voltaire, and his influence on the opinions of the age. She believed, too, that he might successfully aid her in weaning the king from

the habits he had contracted—but which then, perhaps, were too thoroughly confirmed—of drunkenness and gluttony, varied only by his addiction to the chase. The white cotton cap and apron of a *chef* were distasteful to her. She would have had him become the patron of men of letters; encourage science and art; embellish his capital, and take some pleasure in intellectual conversation and the society of the *savants*.

But it was late in the day for Louis XV. to become thus reformed. It was both his misfortune and his fault to be too thoroughly perverted; and, besides, he disliked Voltaire. Yet, at the solicitation of the favorite, he was on the point of inviting him to the *petits-soupers* at Versailles. Listening ears, however, had by some means obtained a knowledge of the secret, and before the honor of an invitation was actually conferred, all the illustrious mediocrities of the court were up in arms, to oppose so monstrous an infraction of propriety as that of admitting a poet to sit at the table of a king.

The Jesuits were in an extraordinary state of agitation, and, by their denunciations of the diabolical project, frightened poor Marie Leczinska and the dauphin out of their senses. "The king," they told them, "ran the risk of becoming a philosopher!" What more terrible fate could befall him? He still said his prayers daily, and went regularly to Mass, though he had given up his Holy Week devotions—not caring humbly to ask of his priest a "ticket of confession," which was absolutely necessary since the Gallican church had received the horrid *Bulle Unigenitus* into its bosom, and the pugnacious Christophe de Beaumont reigned as Archbishop of Paris. Pre-

dictions, presentiments, anticipations, of some national calamity looming in the future, were at that time very general. No one knew exactly the nature of the trouble looked forward to, but each interpreted his fears according to his opinion of the aspect of things then existing in Church and State.

The queen and the dauphin, alarmed by the Jesuits—who probably foresaw their own downfall—believed that the universe would be shaken to its centre if Louis XV.—guided by the guiding spirit of the age, the mocking sceptical Voltaire—should profess himself of the sect of the philosophers. Yet Voltaire and his “beautiful Emilie” had sat at the table of the queen’s father—the worthy Stanislaus—at whose little court of Lunéville the Marquise de Boufflers played the part of the Marquise de Pompadour at Versailles—and no harm had come of it; though the excellent Pole, so much respected by his subjects, was, in fact, very much of a philosopher in his principles. But, as the poet himself remarked to the Duc de Richelieu, “Horace and Virgil had dined with Augustus; why, then, should not Voltaire sup with Louis XV.?”

Why not, indeed? except that, as Madame de Pompadour sarcastically observed, “Dunces do not like to find themselves at the table with a man of genius.” So powerful, however, was the influence secretly employed to exclude him from the *petits appartements*, that he determined to resign the office conferred on him of Gentleman of the King’s Bed-chamber—its duties being so little in harmony with his feelings and character. The king gave him permission to dispose of his place (worth from two to three hundred thousand francs) as then was customary, but allowed him to retain all the privileges attached to it. As Voltaire

loved money, that course, naturally, was much more agreeable to him than resigning.

Piron—who professed to be a rival of Voltaire—piqued by the favor with which the dramatic trifle of “Le Temple de la Gloire,” had been received by the court, vented his spleen in a satire upon it. It was amusing and epigrammatic, it must be confessed—far more so than those with which jealousy had inspired him when ridiculing compositions of a more elevated character—Mérope and Œdipus, for instance. Piron, though so highly appreciated in his congenial taverns and wine-shops and at the Théâtre de la Foire, could not forgive Voltaire his success in the *salons* and at the Théâtre Français. Never since he put into rhyme the false report that Voltaire had fled from Paris to escape incarceration in the Bastille for his play of “Mahomet,” when in reality the Cardinal had despatched him to Berlin on a secret mission, had Piron omitted any opportunity of disparaging, in scurrilous epigrams, the productions of his rival.

Piron was especially a poet of the people. His satire in no way detracted from the success of Voltaire’s little piece when it was produced at the opera. Some complimentary lines to the Maréchal de Saxe had been added to the prologue by the author, to be recited on the occasion of his visit to the theatre. His siege operations at Rocoux had delayed his return to Paris until the public festivities were nearly concluded. To do the honors, as it were, of the hero’s triumph then devolved, at the king’s request, chiefly on Madame de Pompadour, who accompanied him to the opera, and by previous arrangement with Mdlle. Favart, who personated *La Gloire*, procured an ovation for the maréchal. Moved by a sudden impulse,

as it seemed, the actress, while reciting the new lines of the prologue, snatched from her head the laurels she wore in her character of Glory, and advancing towards the front of the royal box, then occupied by De Saxe, laid her leafy crown before him.

The whole of the audience, inspired by this act, simultaneously arose, and, with *vivas* hearty and prolonged, applauded the great soldier with so much enthusiasm that with difficulty he repressed his emotion. Voltaire was present, but out of sight. The *maréchal* insisted on his coming forward. The applause was then renewed, and taken up again and again, vociferously, in the course of the piece.

From the prevalence of *les modes Pompadour* among the more distinguished and courtly part of the audience, it would almost seem that it had been intended to celebrate also the triumph of the *marquise*. The number of embroidered coats "*à la Marquise*" worn by the gentlemen was remarkable. They were of the color she favored—a full bright blue, once known as "*l'œil du roi*," now as "*bleu Pompadour*." The *coiffure* and *fichu à la Marquise*, with the *panier* of diminished proportions, were also general.

Even the military paid their court by wearing the "*rosette à la Pompadour*"—her arrangement of the sword-knot of the *Maréchal de Saxe*, who, not being very attentive to the neatness of his dress, had appeared in the presence of the *marquise* with his sword-knot put on in a rather slovenly fashion. With her own fair hands she arranged it for him, and with so much taste and skill that the officers of his *corps* generally adopted it. Voltaire also took to a sky-blue coat at this time, and was faithful to it to the end.

Although the poet might not sup with the king, he

was invited to sup with the maréchal, whom, with the chief officers of his corps and a number of distinguished guests, courtiers and ladies, the marquise was to entertain in her apartments the next evening. After the opera, which began and ended early, the maréchal was engaged to the queen. Marie Leczinska had taken no part in the *fêtes*, though more than once requested to do so by the king. Naturally she did not wish to assist at the triumph of her rival; yet she was anxious that the maréchal should know that she was not insensible to his merits and the services he had rendered to France.

The queen's intimate circle included the Duc and Duchesse de Luynes; the Cardinal de Luynes, their uncle; M. and Madame de la Vauguyon; the President Hénault; Madame de Flavacourt, sister of Madame de Chateauroux; the Jesuit Père Griffet, and others. They were said to pass their evenings in the manner supposed to be customary in England—in reading books of devotion, or in dreary, desultory conversation, with long intervals of silence; often ending in the company generally being caught napping. Sometimes the game of "What do you promise me?" was introduced by way of recreation. Or the dauphin and the young dauphine would sing psalms to the accompaniment of the harpsichord; the evening concluding, when the circle was sufficiently wide awake, with general prayer. The queen read—the company made the responses.

The maréchal prepared himself to entertain, rather than to be entertained; to tell anecdotes of the war; to laud the courage of the king and the bravery of the dauphin. On arriving, he found the usual circle assembled, and some of them, to his surprise, engaged



at the card-table—an occupation that appeared to amuse them more than the warrior's tales of the battle-field. The queen lamented with him the miseries occasioned by war; complimented him on his successes; but mildly reproved him for entertaining his soldiers with plays, when serious thoughts should rather be instilled into their minds, as men about to face death. The maréchal explained that it was far more desirable to keep them bright and cheerful, whatever might befall them, than to oppress their minds with gloom and the terrors of an approaching end. Opinions differed on the subject, but no one went to sleep.

When about to take leave of the queen, the maréchal was requested by her, as appropriately concluding their serious discussion, to join with her circle in prayer. Of course he willingly assented. An arm-chair serving as a *prie-dieu*, was then placed for each person in front of a large crucifix opposite her majesty's bed (she received in her bed-chamber), the whole forming a semicircle. The queen read, as was her custom, and the kneeling company responded. All the saints in the litany were named in their turn, and as each name was pronounced, "*Ora pro nobis*" was duly ejaculated.

The list was a long one. The maréchal was not in robust health. The ovation at the opera, and his long conversation with the queen, had exhausted him. Sooth to say, or shame to say, he fell asleep as he knelt in his arm-chair; the monotony of the oft-repeated "*Ora pro nobis*" overcoming his best efforts to keep his eyes open.

The prayers are ended; the company rise from their knees—all except the maréchal. He seems to be

buried in profound meditation, and is allowed for a few minutes to remain undisturbed. The pious Marie Leczinska knows that the life of this gallant soldier is not free from blame, and she hopes that, suddenly conscience-stricken, a conversion may, through her, have taken place.

But he stirs not. The company, in a circle, stand gazing upon him. At last the queen approaches him. "Come, *Monsieur de Saxe*," she says softly, "that's enough for the first time." There is no response. Presently, a little louder, she speaks, now somewhat doubtingly: "Do not fatigue yourself, *Monsieur de Saxe*." The sleeper is partly aroused, and in a loud voice, to make up for long silence, begins, "*Ora pro nobis, Ora pro nobis*." Even the queen and the pious dauphin cannot resist laughing, and the maréchal, now fully aware of what has happened, rises from his knees, and, with much confusion of face, apologizes to the queen for his misdemeanor. She readily takes into consideration his fatiguing campaign, his enfeebled state of health, and willingly pardons; believing that the spirit was willing, though the flesh was weak.

How different the scene on the following evening, when the maréchal was received by the brilliant marquise! Her guests are all of high rank, or of distinguished attainments. The supper prepared for them is the production of Mouthier, the famous *chef* of the *petits appartements*, and a man more considered and valued by Louis XV. than the most enlightened of his ministers or the most skilful of his generals. Mouthier prides himself on his ancestry. He is a descendant of a long line of famous cooks, an illustrious culinary family. His art, he firmly believes, is the first in the world—one that, rightly regarded, would have

more real influence on the fate of nations than the wildest policy of all the most able diplomatists of Europe combined.

His grandfather was *chef* to Louis XIV., and deep in the confidence of Madame de Maintenon, "a very great lady," he says, who, following the gastronomic counsels of Mouthier, managed the *Grand Monarque* and his ministers as she willed. Faithful to the traditions of his family, the younger Mouthier may have imparted these culinary secrets to Madame de Pompadour, and her twenty years of omnipotence in France thus be accounted for.

At all events, the appointments of her supper-table are splendid, the arrangements artistic, and M. Mouthier's repast no less so. It gives evident satisfaction to all who partake of it; it is mirth-inspiring, as the great *artiste* probably intended; for the dullest brain is quickened, and some sparkle added to the liveliest. Piquant *bon-mots* are plentiful, and flashes of wit follow each other in quick succession, in brilliant repartee.

The toilets of the ladies, and their gracefully arranged *coiffures* of flowers and lace, are charming; while the perfect taste of the marquise—who has brought this fashion into vogue—is seen in the extreme elegance of her own dress, and the artistic refinement exhibited in the furniture and embellishments of her apartment. She is decidedly the star of the court, this "*jolie marquise bourgeoise*," who, unfortunately, loving power, to obtain it, "had been so weak," Marmontel regretfully observes, "as to wish to please the king, and so unfortunate as to succeed." Her conversation fascinates even more than her beauty attracts. Her vivacity sets the bright thoughts in

motion that might have lain dormant in other minds, but for contact with her own.

Her suppers were not Bacchanalian feasts, like those at which, in their youth, Madame de Tencin, Madame du Deffant, Madame de Caylus, and other *esprits forts* of easy manners, assisted under the regency. The moral tone of society was certainly but very slightly improved. But the habits of the king's earlier years, and the grave ministry of Fleury, had compelled profligacy to veil itself; and if the men and women who sat at the table of the Marquise de Pompadour—Madame du Châtelet was one of them—were not free from vice, they at least did not, as formerly, boast of it as meritorious.

Society was probably never more frivolous and corrupt than from about the middle of the eighteenth century to the dawn of the Revolution. Its occupations were puerile; the conversation of the fashionable *salons*—as distinguished from the three or four philosophical and literary reunions—had degenerated into idle gossip, or the discussion of a budget of scandalous reports. Yet at no time did the society so pique itself on its politeness—which was displayed in an overstrained *empressement*, that gave the idea of friends and acquaintances being intensely interested in each other; so long, of course, as they remained together. Society, with its falseness, its hollowness, its affected geniality, and deceptive mask of politeness, is described with much force and piquancy in Madame de Graffigny's "Lettres d'une Péruvienne."

The age of grand manners was especially that of Louis XIV. All the formal etiquette which then kept ordinary mortals at a distance from the sacred person of the king was yet rigidly observed at Versailles, and

continued to be, far into the reign of the unfortunate Louis XVI. But the *grands seigneurs* of the middle of the eighteenth century were far less *grands* than those of the preceding one. The poets and *litterati* now held up their heads in the society of princes. In the Louis XIV. period they hardly dared hold up their eyes; and before the magnificent Bashaw, himself, would have felt honored to be permitted to grovel on their knees—as some of the household still did when they drank the health of the “well-beloved.” But the old *régime*, with its grand manners and stately politeness, was in its decadence. Nothing could restore its *prestige*, or prevent the spread of philosophism—destined to overthrow both it and the very artificial state of society under which alone it could continue to exist. Not that politeness was altogether extirpated as the formalities of the old *régime* died out; enough of it survived, and remains still, to entitle French society to be called the most polished and agreeable in Europe.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

The Young Chevalier.—A very Gay Carnival.—Marie Josephe de Saxe.—A Weeping Young Bridegroom.—Court Usages Contemned.—Popularity of the Chevalier.—Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle.—Charles Edward Arrested.—“How Time Flies!”—Public Disapprobation.—The Mass in London—1748.

ON the 20th of September, 1746, a small French privateer, hovering near the coast of Scotland, was seen to run a boat inshore, and presently to receive on board a poor, weary-looking, weather-beaten wanderer. As soon as he had stepped on deck, he turned towards the inlet where he had embarked, and waved a handkerchief, as a signal, maybe, that thus far all was safe, or, perhaps, as a final adieu. It was answered from the rocky heights above, as the little craft, crowding all sail, speedily got under way.

It was the gallant young Chevalier, “Bonnie Prince Charlie,” escaping from the land of his fathers. Since the fatal defeat at Culloden, he had for five months wandered, a lonely fugitive, wounded, footsore, and weakened by fatigue; hiding by day in the wild ravines and caverns of the Highlands; sleeping in crevices of the rocks, exposed to all weathers, when no hut was near to shelter him, and suffering from hunger and thirst. Gay, handsome, courageous, adventurous, romantic, his misfortunes kindled in women’s hearts the deepest sympathy and devotion. Tracked from place to place, and a price set on his head, yet none, though abhorring him as a Papist, was

found base enough to earn wealth by betraying him; but often, when recognized, he was furnished with some disguise that enabled him to elude the vigilance of pursuers.

On the 10th of October the schooner, which had narrowly escaped capture by an English cruiser, made for the port of Roscof, near Morlaix. There, in a sailor's dress, the prince landed, and was soon on his way to Paris. He was received by the people with many acclamations, and was fêted and entertained at the Hôtel de Ville. The court also welcomed him with much distinction. Having rested from his fatigues, and recovered the good looks which his five months of hard living had somewhat marred, he created a great sensation amongst the ladies, who lost no opportunity of magnifying his deeds of arms, and extolling him as a hero of romance. So that Prince Charlie was the darling of the belles of Paris that season, as well as of the belles of Bonnie Scotland. And a very gay season it was—the gayest carnival that had been known for years.

There was again a royal marriage on the carpet. The poor young dauphin had become a widower in the preceding July, and a second bride had been chosen for him ere his tears were dry for the loss of the first, to whom he had been greatly attached. While he wept and lamented silently and alone in his chamber, preparations were being rapidly urged on for court balls and plays, public festivities and rejoicings. Many were the intrigues which the unexpected death of the Spanish infanta occasioned. Each party strove to further its own interests at court by suggesting to the king a princess of its own choice.

The queen seemed to desire an Austrian connection. The Jesuits preferred an Italian bride—a niece, or other relative, of the Pope. But the Maréchal de Saxe, then so popular in France, and all-powerful with the king, proposed his own niece as dauphine, Marie Josephe de Saxe. She was the daughter of the maréchal's natural brother, the Elector of Saxony, Augustus III. of Poland, who had supplanted King Stanislaus. Both Marie Leczinska and the dauphin would have opposed this choice, had they possessed any influence. Having none, their objections would only have met with a curt "*Je le veux*," for the king approved; and his decision once made, for good or for evil, he always abided by it. The young princess, however, was found to be both pretty and amiable; more lively and agreeable, the court generally considered, than the grave and pious Spanish infanta. The feelings of the queen and of the still sorrowing dauphin were not unknown at Dresden, and accordingly the princess, well trained in the part she had to play, evinced, on her arrival at Versailles, much tenderness towards the former, much sympathy with the latter.

It was the etiquette of the time that the bride should wear, in a diamond bracelet, the miniature of her father. The queen having expressed a desire to see the portrait of Augustus—to whom Stanislaus owed so many of his troubles and years of poverty and obscurity—the young princess, presenting the bracelet, said, "See, mamma, what a good likeness." It proved to be no miniature of Augustus, but one of the queen's father she was wearing. The dauphin, poor youth (he was but little past his seventeenth year), was unable to restrain his emotion and tears



during the performance of the marriage ceremony. The princess perceived it. On the conclusion of the rite, addressing her weeping young bridegroom, she said, "Do not restrain your tears, Monsieur; they show me what I may hope from your esteem, if I am so fortunate as to deserve it."

This very prim, formal, set speech is found in all the histories and memoirs, authentic and otherwise, that treat of the events of that period. If ever uttered at all—which, as with so many other silly speeches and sayings recorded as the wisdom of royalty, is doubtful—it proves nothing in favor of the young lady, except that she performed the part she had been taught remarkably well. She, however, knew so little of the French language that, on her arrival, she was unable to make herself understood, and needed the services of a French teacher—far more than Marie Leczinska had once needed those of the academician Moncrif, to correct the inelegancies she had contracted from a *bourgeoise* instructress. The dauphin himself undertook to teach his bride French, and it was while pursuing their linguistic studies that the young couple fell in love. The disgust of the court may be imagined, when the scandal was confirmed that the dauphine, of whom better things had been expected, actually was content to live happily with her husband in *bourgeois* fashion. It was shameful thus to condemn the usages of the court, and openly to reprove the king. What an unfortunate father! What an undutiful son! What a silly young bride!

None, perhaps, had more enjoyed the festivities of this brilliant carnival, or entered with more zest into the rather prolonged gayeties of the marriage *fêtes* than Prince Charles Edward. He is said to have exhibited

a fair share of French volatility, and while forgetting his own fatigues in the pleasures and dissipations of Paris, to have evinced neither sorrow nor sympathy for the sufferings—far greater than his own—of those who had followed his fortunes and supported his cause. But at that time, as an opponent of England, he was popular in France with all classes—from the court to the people. The ladies, with greater admiration for his personal qualities, vied with each other in seeking his good graces. Amongst the nobility many were willing, even eager, to form a matrimonial alliance with him. He probably thought that an honor too great to confer on any noble house. Royalty, though fallen, must wed with royalty; and the queen, with little reason, put an end to the hopes of many a beauty, by announcing that one of her daughters was destined for the prince.

But Madame de Pompadour began to be desirous of peace. The king, at her instance, had once more visited the armies, and the Maréchal de Saxe undertaken to bring about peace by new conquests. M. de Saint-Severin was sent to England to negotiate, while the maréchal besieged the strong places of Holland. The much-desired peace, of which Madame de Pompadour, as first minister, took to herself the chief credit, though the precipitancy with which it was concluded met with much disapproval—France gaining nothing by eight years of war but an addition of twelve million livres to her debt—was definitively signed at Aix-la-Chapelle, on the 8th of October, 1748.

Immediately after, instead of giving Charles Edward his daughter in marriage, Louis XV. despatched the Marquis de Puisieux with an order to the prince to quit the kingdom. Several previous intimations

had been given him that it was desirable he should voluntarily do so. He had chosen to disregard them. He now set at naught the king's order, and made the Parisians aware that he was to be ejected, in compliance with the demand of the English. At once his popularity increased, and he fancied that any attempt to use force to eject him would be resented by the people. He was, however, quietly arrested in the corridor of the Opera; precautions having been taken, as it was known he was armed, to prevent any resistance. The Marquis de Vaudreuil then conducted him to Vincennes.

After three days' confinement, the Comte de Maurepas was sent to apologize for the severity of this treatment, on the ground of imperative necessity. Also, to inform him that he was free to retire to any country he chose, on giving his word of honor not to return to France, until the ministry had come to an arrangement with England on that point. The king—who had a liking for the young Chevalier, and admired the chivalric spirit that would have led him, with very slight encouragement, again to strike a blow for the English crown—is said to have much regretted that he could not act otherwise than rigorously towards him.

It appears, however, that an asylum in France might possibly have been conceded by the Treaty, had the Chevalier been fully aware of the position of Madame de Pompadour. He paid his court to her, as to a young and charming woman who pleased the king, and whose energy and animation had given vogue to other entertainments in the dull court of Louis XV. than the customary dreary round of excessive eating and drinking. Her conspicuous talent and wonder-

ful resource had enabled her to multiply and vary the amusements in a manner that excited his surprise and admiration. She had accomplished a task that the sagacious Madame de Maintenon confessedly had failed in—that of “amusing a man who was no longer amusable”—having drawn from the king an exclamation on the rapid flight of time.

Oppressed by indolence and his own gloomy thoughts, it had been the habit of his life to complain that the days and the hours moved wearily on with leaden feet; but when his sluggish mind was awakened to take some degree of interest in the new amusements and pursuits created for him by the marquise, he had several times remarked, with surprise, “Ah! how time flies!” The young Chevalier did not know that the bodily fatigue and labor of brain undergone by this accomplished lady were very far less the results of her love for the king than her love of ministerial power, and that she might probably have taken up his cause, had he sought her in her “bureau of office,” instead of complimenting her like other dangles at her toilet. He did not comprehend this; yet she treated him graciously—as she would any other fine young man whose misfortunes she pitied, and whom she would have endeavored to serve, had he asked her. She thought him a desirable acquisition to the general court circle; and when he went his way she, as well as the king, bade him adieu with regret.

On the other hand, it has been asserted that Madame de Pompadour, aware that the prince confided in the generosity of Louis XV. to afford him—as promised before his embarkation for England—a refuge in France, should he need it, reminded the king of it when the arrest was ordered, and spoke warmly

in the prince's favor. Louis is said to have been extremely annoyed by the urgency of her appeal, and to have replied, even angrily, "What would you have me do, Madame? Must I ruin my kingdom because the son of the Chevalier Saint George likes to live in Paris?" He was, in fact, supine only because France had no navy, and was in this respect powerless against England. The Parisian public, however, expressed their disapprobation of the king's expulsion of the young Chevalier, in their usual mode of giving vent to their feelings and opinions. Epigrams innumerable, more or less keen and cutting; ribald jests, songs of the *Pont-Neuf*, assailed the ears of royalty—for by some means they always found their way to Versailles. At the theatres, every speech, every sentence of a play, that could be turned into an allusion to the people's cause of displeasure, was seized on by the audience and applauded vociferously—none more so than the line—

"Il est roi dans les fers; qu'êtes-vous sur le trône?"\*

There were many who would have had the king, at all hazards, go to war for the cause of the young Pretender, and believed the people of England to be so anxious to receive him that "a French corporal and three grenadiers could place him on the throne." But Louis XV. followed the wiser counsels of one who told him, "Sire, it is impossible; and if your majesty wishes mass said in London, five hundred thousand men will be needed to serve it." Alas for Protestantism! what a change has since come over the spirit of the nation!

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\* "He is royal in chains; what are you on the throne?"

## CHAPTER XXX.

The Salon of Mdme. Geoffrin.—A Graduate of the Salons.—Marie Thérèse Rodet.—Les Glaces des Gobelins.—A Constant Dinner-Guest.—Anecdotes of M. Geoffrin.—A Student of History.—A Bourgeois Household.—“La Fontenelle des Femmes.”—An Aged Gallant.—A Cherished Antique.—The Pastorals of Sceaux.—“Le Grand Prosateur.”—The Well of Ste. Geneviève.—A Joke of the Salons.—Grandeur and Frivolity.—In Quest of Conversation.—From St. Louis to St. Honoré.

THE certain though gradual passing away of the exclusiveness which had once been so rigorously observed in the aristocratic society of the old French *régime* was nowhere more conspicuously marked than in the rapidly rising celebrity of the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin. It was already in great repute, and frequented by persons of rank and distinction, though Madame Geoffrin herself, both by birth and by marriage, could but be classed with the middle class of citizens.

“Her *salon*,” says Sainte-Beuve, “was the best regulated, best conducted, and most firmly established of any *salon* in France, since the days of the famous Hôtel de Rambouillet. It was, in fact, one of the institutions of the eighteenth century.” By the death of Madame de Tencin, who for some time had been in failing health, and the more sudden and unexpected one of the Marquise du Châtelet, in 1749, two of the most distinguished of the literary and philosophical

*salons* were closed. The men of genius and of letters, philosophers, eminent *artistes*, and all who composed the social circle of those ladies, passed over, as if by right of inheritance, to the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin.

Not that an entirely new society was thus formed. There were indeed but few first appearances in her circle, but, generally, those who now became the habitual frequenters of her *salon* had before been but occasional visitors. "Ah! the crafty little woman," exclaimed Madame de Tencin, when, in her last illness, Madame Geoffrin assiduously visited her, "she comes to entrap my animals." The animals were considered as more rightfully the property of Madame du Defant. Her *salon* had been established some years when Madame Geoffrin threw open the doors of her *hôtel*, in the Rue St. Honoré, and invited the fashionable world, the philosophers, and literati to enter her *salon bourgeois*—destined shortly to eclipse all others and to obtain European renown. She was not then in the heyday of youth and beauty, but had arrived at that discreet period of life usually called middle age, and which supposes a general expectation of completing a century—Madame Geoffrin was bordering on fifty.

It would have been late in the day to have acquired such wide-spread social celebrity had she only then made her *début* in society. But, possessed of ample means, she had for several years past been quietly receiving, and been herself well received by such leaders of society as Madame de Tencin, Mesdames de Forcalquier and Dupin, as well as in the limited but refined circle of Madame de Graffigny. She had graduated, as it were, in the *salons* of the *beau monde*. Being a keen observer, though but indifferently educated,

she had acquired there the most charming ease of manner, and a dignified repose, that harmonized well with her pleasing personal appearance and her admirable taste in dress. She wore very fine laces, and the richest materials, either black, or of subdued shades of gray; and without departing conspicuously from the fashions of the time, modified them considerably, to suit her age and her tall slight figure.

As hostess, her tact was perfect, and she is said to have possessed in an eminent degree that "*savoir vivre* which consists in putting every one in his proper place, and keeping one's own." Her opinions were rather deeply tinged with the prevailing philosophy of the age. But she had her *tribune*, or private seat, at the church of the Capucines, where the queen and the dauphine performed their devotions, as she had her box at the Théâtre des Bouffons and the Théâtre Français, where she sometimes received the visits of her friends.

This celebrated *dame bourgeois*, who for twenty-five years was the centre of the most brilliant of the social, literary, artistic, and philosophic circles of Paris, was the daughter of a *valet-de-chambre* of the Duchesse de Bourgogne, the mother of Louis XV. Of a speculative turn, he had risked a small sum, and gained a very large one, when the *Système* Law was in operation. He was thus enabled to give a handsome dowry to his daughter, Mdle. Marie Thérèse Rodet, when she married the thriving *bourgeois*, M. Geoffrin. He was the founder (or is generally so called) of the Manufacture de glaces des Gobelins,\* also a lieuten-

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\* The actual founder of this establishment was Rivière-Dufreigny, who, in 1654, under the patronage of Colbert, obtained for



ant-colonel of the *bourgeois* militia. This was an honorary post, without duties or emolument, which gave him a sort of importance in his own and his neighbors' eyes, but interfered not with his habits of industry and strict attention to the business by which he eventually realized a large fortune.

As there was something artistic in M. Geoffrin's occupation, it brought him in contact with persons of rank and wealth, with whom he became so far intimate that they did not disdain to partake of his liberal hospitalities—*recherchés* dinners, etc. His tastes were so far in harmony with those of his wife, that he rather encouraged than checked her inclination for society and her efforts to form a distinguished circle of her own. M. and Madame Geoffrin connected themselves, if only in idea, with the nobility by marrying their only daughter to the Marquis de La Ferté-Imbault. When M. Geoffrin, who was considerably older than his wife, either retired from business or gave up its management into younger hands, he became Madame Geoffrin's major-domo, and performed the duties of his office admirably.

For some years there sat at the bottom of Madame

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it a privilege or patent, which he afterwards sold to a company. At that time the plates of glass were merely blown, and the largest did not exceed four feet in dimension. But in 1688 a method of melting the glass and running it into moulds was invented by Lucas de Nehon. This was done at a manufactory, on a large scale, at St. Gobin, in Picardy; the sheets of glass being sent to Paris for polishing, framing, etc. Better glass was obtained by this process, as well as mirrors of a much larger size. The Venetian mirrors, consequently, became less in demand. M. Geoffrin was therefore not the founder of the manufactory, but one of the founder's successors—though he may, probably, have made some improvements on De Nehon's process.

Geoffrin's dinner and supper table a dignified-looking, white-haired old gentleman; bland in his manners, but very modest and retiring; speaking only when spoken to, but looking very happy when the guests seemed to enjoy the good cheer set before them. When, at last, his accustomed place became vacant, and some brilliant butterfly of Madame's circle of "occasional visitors"—who perhaps had smiled patronizingly on the silent old gentleman—noticing his absence, perchance would carelessly inquire what had become of her constant dinner-guest, she would reply, "Why, that was my husband. Alas! he's dead, poor man"—so little was the consideration shown to this worthy creature in his own house. Yet it both pleased and amused him silently to gaze on the throng of rank, fashion, and learning assembled in his wife's *salons*, and to witness her social success.

Numerous anecdotes are told of M. Geoffrin, of which one may well question the veracity. Evidently this *bourgeois gentilhomme* was not fitted to play his part in society with the tact and easy grace that distinguished his wife. But it may be doubted whether a man who for many years had successfully conducted an important establishment, requiring much intelligence in its management, was so nearly idiotic as many of these anecdotes seem to represent him. He is said to have been recommended to read a certain historical work, the first volume being then lent to him, and afterwards changed, as he supposed, through five or six volumes unto the end. The same first volume, however, was always returned to him, he reading it over and over again, quite unconscious of the joke of his friends. When asked his opinion of the work, he said, "It was extremely interesting,

though he had met with a few repetitions, which the author, he fancied, might have avoided." Also he appears to have been a student of "Bayle's Encyclopædia." But the book being printed in double columns, he read them together as one; often remarking that "it was a most abstruse work."

The President Hénault being one of Madame Geoffrin's faithful followers, M. Geoffrin thought it right to read his "Histoire Chronologique," and was much surprised after a diligent perusal to learn from it that Louis XIII. was not the son of Louis XII., and Henri IV. the son of Henry III.; and so on. With this enlightened study of history, philosophy, and geography, his favorite subjects, he profitably employed the leisure hours of the evening of his life, the results being as amusing to his literary friends as they were interesting to himself. Yet he had brains, taste, and skill enough to produce in his manufactory the splendid mirrors that rivalled or surpassed those of Venice, and that formed some of the most tasteful ornaments of the royal palaces and hôtels of the nobility—acquiring a handsome fortune by his industry.

The Marquis d'Argenson, a great frequenter of the *salons*, refers in his "Mémoires," though without mentioning names, to the household arrangements of M. Geoffrin, and the part he took in them.

"I could name," he says, "a certain household, the master of which is a man of very ample means, where the usual order of things in *bourgeois* families is entirely reversed—the husband taking upon himself the duties of the wife; and he performs them well. He spends his mornings in settling accounts, ordering the dinners and suppers, and, with the aid of his *chef*,

preparing the *menu*. The mistress of this establishment has the reputation of being *une femme d'esprit*. She is epigrammatic and sarcastic, without any ill-nature; but her husband, who is entirely at her orders, though he takes his place at her table, rarely ventures to utter a remark. He is, however, a strict man with his servants. If he perceives any neglect, or any defect in the repast, he reprimands them severely; and they respect him, though they also fear him. He has even been known to remonstrate with his lady wife, when her expenditure, though she is a prudent woman, and he a liberal man, has seemed to him larger than necessary."

Notwithstanding these excellent qualities, the period of Madame Geoffrin's greatest celebrity was after her husband's death, when the large fortune came entirely under her own management. She has been called "*La Fontenelle des femmes*," her idea of happiness, like that great philosopher's, consisting in the absence of all disquietude in her social surroundings, and all disturbance of the serenity of her mind. But the desire to sail on summer seas, and to have the path of life spread with a velvet-pile carpet, is as little uncommon, even in these days, as it was in those of Fontenelle and Madame Geoffrin. In her wish, however, that the even tenor of her life should run on smoothly and undisturbed, she was not so selfishly influenced as Fontenelle. Her happiness included the happiness of others; for she was kind-hearted and benevolent in the extreme—glad to be of service, assisting many with her purse, and, where that availed not, affording her hearty sympathy. Marmontel was one of her especial favorites; but, generally, she was interested in the success of young literary men, introducing them to

the princes and courtiers who visited her; some such patronage, even then, having its value.

Fontenelle, at the age of ninety-four, was still a dangler in the *salons*. He was always considered parsimonious, never offering, or expressing any willingness, to aid a needy literary friend. Yet this was less, it would seem, from actual parsimony than from a determination to thrust from him all that was unpleasant to the eye or painful to the thoughts. But Madame Geoffrin frequently obtained from him large subscriptions for benevolent purposes. She would tell him of certain individuals in whom she was interested—well known to him in most cases—who had either fallen into poverty or met with some catastrophe, and whom it was desirable to assist. He would express his regret or surprise, and his approval of her plans; when she would say, "May I depend on you for forty or fifty louis?" "Certainly, madame," he immediately replied; "I thank you for reminding me of it." Fontenelle, therefore, should not be too harshly judged; for it is not every one who will do what is considered to be his duty, simply by being reminded of it.

It was in Madame Geoffrin's *salon* that Fontenelle, wishing still to be gallant, although half way between ninety and a hundred, observing that a lady had dropped her glove, rose from his seat with the intention of presenting it to her. In attempting to stoop to pick it up, he fell forward on his knees. In an instant he was surrounded. Such a panic among the ladies! such a lamentation over their "dear Fontenelle!" For, as was remarked, "there was as much fussing over him in the *salons*, and as much care taken of him, as though he had been a rare work of art, or

a valuable piece of old china." On this occasion he was tenderly assisted to get up again on his feet, but not until he had on his knees, as he said, begged pardon of all those beautiful ladies for his extreme awkwardness. "Alas! dear ladies," he exclaimed, "I am no longer eighty!" At that youthful period of his life he would have picked up a lady's glove with alacrity. Now, alas! he was getting somewhat into years, and fair ladies must take the will for the deed.

The Marquis d'Argenson, after the death of Madame de Lambert, wandered from *salon* to *salon*, seeking peace, but finding everywhere a Babel of tongues. He was yearning for conversation, but in that self-asserting age there was nothing but talking. Listening had gone out of fashion with true politeness. For his own part, he tells us, he had given up the quest, and had taken the resolution "to retire and keep silence." But old habits are often not easily overcome. D'Argenson himself was a great talker; but a talker of the old school. He did not carry with him to the social reunion a budget of scandal, determined, whether listened to or not, to leave none of it untold. He liked a long learned disquisition, and preferred to take the leading part in it—more after the pattern of Rambouillet.

The last souvenirs of the Rambouillet days still lingered, it was said, in the château and gardens of Sceaux, where the Duchesse du Maine, setting at naught her threescore and ten years, still masqueraded with her guests. Chloés and Strephons, with their crooks and their lambs, would spend the soft twilight of the summer nights rambling in shady groves, reposing by purling streams, or supping in grottoes on white bread and honey, fresh fruits and cream, until

the twittering of birds and the rosy hue of the eastern sky warned this party of imbeciles that it was time to confide their bleating young lambs to the care of a real shepherd, and that they should return to the château—the ladies to repair the injuries done to patches and paint; the gentlemen to write sonnets on the little hump-backed duchess's beauty. The grounds of Sceaux were specially arranged for these pastoral frolics.

But it was not a travesty of the sentimentalities of the Rambouillet school that d'Argenson pined for; but something that bore a resemblance to its *salon causeur*. A modification of it, doubtless. Not one of those oratorical exhibitions by which Jean Louis Balzac, "le grand prosateur," charmed a listening circle of pedantic and romantic belles and beaux—while the clever and amiable Madeleine de Scudéry played the part of the recording angel. Sitting at Balzac's feet, she noted down his eloquent words; the next post conveying them, in multiplied copies, to the furthest limits of France.

Ah! M. d'Argenson, your sad, perturbed spirit will ne'er be at rest if, in the degenerate days you have fallen on, you seek in the boudoir of beauty, or the *salon* of a free-thinker, mental aliment of that substantial kind. A flavorless apology for it is reported to exist in the *salon* of the Marquise du Deffant. But this is an error. Her *ennui* has already *ennuyé* many of her former circle; and they have migrated to the hôtel in the Rue St. Honoré. The unfortunate marquise, to add to her weariness of existence, is at this time threatened with blindness. Sad as is the infliction, an incident connected with it has been the occasion of much laughter and mirth in the thoughtless society of Paris.

Madame du Deffant, a free-thinker, and professedly without any religious belief, or, as she said herself, "believing in nothing," had secretly, with her friend, Pont de Veyle, gone to Nanterre, to drink of the well of Ste. Geneviève. There, miraculous cures of blindness and diseases of the eyes were supposed to take place, when, after devotional homage to the statue, the waters were drunk with *faith* in the power and will of the saint to confer the boon applied for. Two of her acquaintances, happening to be travelling that way, had visited the well from curiosity; for usually it was surrounded by suppliants and devotees, who often came from afar to seek a cure for themselves, or to bring gifts to secure a similar favor for others. What, then, was their surprise to see the Marquis de Pont de Veyle among the throng!

He was not drinking of the miracle-working waters himself, but waiting for a woman to whom a draught had been handed; a stout, elderly woman, enveloped, as if for concealment, in an ample cloak, and wearing a close hood. She proved to be the now nearly blind Madame du Deffant, who, while doubting the existence of God, was not free from the superstition of supposing that some sort of godlike power dwelt in the image of a mythical saint. The marquise and her friend departed, unrecognized, as they believed; but the secret expedition to Ste. Geneviève's well was too good a joke to remain unrevealed by her *soi-disant* friends. It went the round of the *salons*, inspired many an epigram, and became the subject of much jesting; no pity, apparently, being felt for the infirmity which had been the cause of her weakness. She, however, determined, as day by day the gloom and obscurity increased, and darkness seemed closing around



her, to leave for awhile the noise and the bustle and the giddy life of Paris, with the hope of finding relief in the quietude of a family château and her native air of Burgundy.

It was not then in the *salon* of the marquise that the fastidious d'Argenson could meet with conversation that pleased him. He went on carping at everything; finding fault with everybody, and confiding his discontent to the pages of his journal. "France is falling into decay," he wrote, "and soon we shall have no good talkers in society. No good dramatic authors, either in tragedy or comedy; no good music or painting; no palaces built. Critics only will remain to us—for the age is becoming ignorant, and the greater its ignorance, the more it becomes critical and contemptuous." But d'Argenson was one of the severest of critics; though he was but just when he designated the eighteenth century "the age of perfection in bagatelles;" adding, "as we have degenerated in great things, we have risen in trifles."

He did not immediately recognize the great social merits of Madame Geoffrin, but thought it would have been more consistent with her position to content herself with being a good housewife, instead of aspiring to be a leader of the best society. Her point of departure, however, being the possession of a large fortune—without which she could not, of course, have achieved European fame—she was fully justified in attempting to soar aloft as a star of the world of fashion; feeling conscious, as she must have done, that she had, over and above her wealth, the qualities that would lead to success.

But d'Argenson, in quest of conversation, found it at last in the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin, and discovered

in Madame herself one of the "good talkers" whose diminished number he lamented. Though it was well known that she was far from being learned, all who heard her relate any incident or adventure knew also "that she had exquisite taste in narration." She possessed, too, in an eminent degree the talent, or art, of so animating and directing a conversation that all her guests should participate in it; and generally even the philosophers preferred the ease and gayety of her *saïon* to the restraint of affected learning in that of Madame de Tencin.

The circle of the Marquise du Châtelet had been a very limited one. She was, indeed, scarcely missed in society, and certainly was not regretted, even by her *amant-en-titre*—Voltaire. He never mentioned his "sublime and respectable Emilie" after her death. And he did well. She was a pretentious blue-stocking, a repulsive woman, and as little deserving to be complimented on her "respectability" as any of the great ladies of that disreputable age. Her learned coterie contrived to discuss their mathematical problems no less satisfactorily in the Rue St. Honoré than in the Ile St. Louis, as may well be inferred; for there awaited them there what the marquise usually forgot to provide for her *savants*—twice a week a good dinner; while every evening the guests of the *salon* "supped there luxuriously at will."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

Madame de Graffigny.—The Duchesse de Richelieu.—A Death-bed Scene.—An Affectionate Husband.—A Visit to the Château de Cirey.—Knick-knacks and Objets d'Art.—“Lettres d'une Peruvienne.”—“Lettres d'Aza.”—M. de La Marche-Courmont.—A Sensitive Authoress.—D'Holbach and Helvetius.—Mdlle. de Ligneville.—A Philosopher in Love.—The Physician Helvetius.—A Rival of Voltaire.—The Epicurean Principle.—A Grateful Annuitant.—Wonderful Moderation.—The Sweepings of a Salon.

WHEN, in 1734, the Duc de Richelieu married his second wife, Mdlle. de Guise, she was accompanied on her journey from Lorraine to Paris by Madame de Graffigny, the widow of Count Huguet de Graffigny, formerly chamberlain to the Duc de Lorraine, the father of Richelieu's young bride. The count was a man of the most violent character. In his paroxysms of rage, he often ill-treated the countess, even threatened to take her life. After a few years of marriage, her health had become so much affected by her husband's brutality that she applied for, and obtained, a judicial separation. Shortly after she was wholly released from her marriage-yoke of misery by the death of the count in the fortress of Nancy—the fatal result of a quarrel with an officer of the Gardes du Corps having led to his imprisonment there.\*

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\* Callot, the famous engraver, was the great-uncle of Madame de Graffigny. Louis XIII. invited him to France, to engrave for

The gentle and amiable Madame de Graffigny, grieved for the sad fate of her unworthy husband, and having, at about the time of his death, also lost her two children, was falling into a state of despondency. It was then that Mdlle. de Guise, with the approval of her friends, proposed to Madame de Graffigny to make the journey to Paris with her; and, after a little hesitation, she was prevailed on to accede to the princess's request. It was thus this distinguished woman, scarcely aware of her own mental gifts—for her life had hitherto been but a tissue of sorrows and troubles—was drawn from the seclusion of her home in Lorraine to become, some few years later, a star in the literary society of Paris.

She was, on her first arrival, extremely well received in the *salons* of the *beau monde*, whither she accompanied the duchess; for the duke could not, of course, so greatly sin against the laws of society as to appear there himself with his young wife. But he was not at all averse to the discreet Madame de Graffigny, to whom the duchess was greatly attached, playing the part of chaperon, and keeping aloof all pretenders to the post of *ami intime*. This institution of polite French society he had an insuperable objection to, now that it threatened to interfere with his own do-

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him the picture of the Siege of Rochelle, and of the Ile de Rhé. When requested to engrave also that of Nancy, the capital of the Duchy of Lorraine, of which the king had taken possession, Callot refused. "I would rather," he said, "cut off my thumb, that I might never again take up the graver, than assist in perpetuating the memory of the misfortunes of my country, and of its prince, my sovereign." Louis XIII. was pleased with Callot's reply, and esteemed him for his noble sentiments. Louis had his propitious moments, though they occurred only at long intervals.

mestic relations. But of all men in the world, who with so little grace as the Duc de Richelieu could raise his voice against it, or appear to oppose it?

It was a maxim of the age to disbelieve in the fidelity of women; and though Richelieu had contemned both the fidelity and affection of Mdle. de Noailles, his first unfortunate wife, he is said to have made some show of being really interested, for the space of two or three months, in the Princess de Guise. His anxiety, however, on the vexed subject of an *ami intime* was soon set at rest. Undeserving as he was of any woman's affection, his second wife was as much devoted to him as the first, and, rejecting as falsehood all the scandal afloat respecting him, believed herself also beloved. He smiled, therefore, on the weakness of his wife, as he smiled on that of other weak women; complacently tolerated her affection, but continued the same libertine course of life as before.

The duchess died at an early age, in 1740. "She had," says a contemporary writer, "a calm and pure soul; beautiful eyes; a sweet expression; the manner of a queen, and the character of an angel." When Richelieu, hat in hand, politely came to take leave of her on her death-bed, she murmured, with almost her last breath, "How sweet it would be to die in your arms!" What could he do, when he heard those dying words, and his eyes met the wistful gaze of hers? what—though he hated a scene—but lay aside his hat, approach the bed, and put his arm round this passionately fond wife! An expression of intense love and happiness momentarily lighted up her face. She strove to turn towards him, and in that dying effort breathed her last. Those who stood around—amongst them was Madame de Graffigny—were deeply affected.

Not so De Richelieu. No starting tear dimmed his eye. But he did not play the hypocrite; feeling no emotion, he feigned none. Gently he withdrew his arm, took up his hat, and silently departed—probably to keep some assignation.

After the death of the Duchesse de Richelieu, Madame de Graffigny, on whom the Emperor Francis I. of Lorraine had conferred a pension of considerable amount, fixed her residence in Paris, where in her modest *salon* the *élite* of the learned and brilliant society of the capital were accustomed twice a week to assemble. A year or two before, while on a visit to Nancy, she was urged by Voltaire and the Marquise du Châtelet to spend a week with them at Cirey. She wrote an account of her sojourn in that abode of philosophy, learning, and love; and of the retreat which the sublime Emilie and her *ami intime* constructed for themselves, and adorned as pleased their own fancy.

Voltaire appears to have done the honors, and to have conducted Madame de Graffigny through his own and the Marquise's apartments. They occupied the new wing she had added to the old château, and to which entrance was obtained by the principal portico and grand staircase of the latter. The furniture and hangings of Voltaire's rooms were of rich crimson velvet. One of them, large but not lofty, was panelled with tapestry and mirrors, the ceiling being formed of framed pictures. Adjoining was a gallery, near forty feet in length, the windows of which looked on the newly planned gardens, with their grottoes and fountains: It was fitted up like a studio—cases of books, mathematical instruments, writing-tables and chairs, and all the necessary appurtenances for writ-

ing and study. The walls were of light yellow wainscot, varnished. A stove was let into the wall, and concealed by a pedestal, on which was a statue of Cupid, with another of Venus on one side, and the Farnesian Hercules on the other—symbolizing, probably, the “Emilie, you are beautiful” of Voltaire, and “he was a marvel of strength” of Madame de Crequy.

The apartments of the marquise were hung with rich watered blue silk, bordered with gold fringe. The walls, everywhere wainscot, painted yellow, with light blue stripes, and varnished. Even her favorite pug dog's house was cushioned, curtained, painted and varnished, light yellow and blue. Bathing-rooms the same. Voltaire seemed especially to admire the wonderfully numerous collection of “knick-knackery” his Emilie had amassed, and drew his visitor's attention to it. Every available corner and recess was filled with the then so much prized Chinese porcelain—Chinese monsters, vases, etc. The marquise had several cases of finely engraved gems and precious stones; some Paul Veroneses and other good pictures; beautiful wood-carvings and statuary. The library was extensive. But geometry, astronomy, and mathematics generally, being the beautiful Emilie's favorite studies, books on those subjects predominated.

With her admiration of a quantity of rich furniture, and a rather pell-mell arrangement of a large and varied collection of *objets d'art*, Madame de Graffigny ends her praises of that home of poetry and science, the Château de Cirey; every part of which, except the new suite of rooms, she found dirty and uncomfortable in the extreme. But in all the palaces and hôtels of the nobles at that period, the splendor of the reception-rooms was more than counterbalanced by

the dirt and discomfort of the private apartments. What miserable holes were the courtiers on service at Versailles content, or compelled to be content, to sleep in and inhabit!

Madame de Graffigny's first published work was a tale, entitled "*Le Mauvais Exemple produit autant de Vertus que de Vices*," "*Nouvelle Espagnole*." It was written at the request of a literary coterie she had joined, each member of which undertook to write a short tale or romance. They were published collectively in 1754, the longest being Madame de Graffigny's. It was considered satirical; the title being a maxim only vaguely developed, it was said, but seemingly pointed at one or two persons, who felt themselves rather offended by it.

Withdrawing from this testy coterie, she wrote and published her "*Lettres d'une Péruvienne*." The success of this work was immense. It went through many editions, and at once established Madame de Graffigny's fame as the most elegant and eloquent prose writer of the female authors of France. It was soon after translated into several languages, and the Italians so greatly admired it that Madame de Graffigny was elected a member of the Academy of Florence. Montesquieu's "*Lettres Persanes*" was the first example of this kind of satirical writing, and had numerous imitators. But the celebrated "*Lettres d'une Péruvienne*" is a work in a far more pure and harmonious style. A delicate vein of irony runs through it. The thoughts are original, clearly and gracefully expressed, and the character of the French and the manners of the period well defined. It is, indeed, a very charming romance, slightly sentimental, of course. As a story, only, it is interesting, and not too long.



With the "Lettres d'une Péruvienne" there is sometimes bound up another and shorter work, entitled "Lettres d'Aza ou d'un Péruvien, pour servir de suite à celles d'une Péruvienne." It was written, after Madame de Graffigny's death, by M. de La Marche-Courmont. He seems not to have been satisfied with the conclusion of the story, which leaves the reader to imagine the fair Zilia forgetting, probably, in time, her faithless lover, Aza, and rewarding with her hand and heart the devoted Captain Deterville, notwithstanding her vow to be eternally constant to the former.

M. de Courmont makes Aza repent and Zilia forgive. He reunites the lovers, and sends them back to Peru in a French man-of-war, ordered by the king for their conveyance. There is no charm of style in these letters. That of Madame de Graffigny is imitated; but Aza has not the fluent pen, the graceful diction, and playful irony of Zilia. One feels a sort of resentment towards this M. de La Marche-Courmont—who was chamberlain to the Margrave of Bareith—for his presumption in detracting from the charm of a pretty romance, by attempting to decide what the author had chosen to leave doubtful.

The success of the "Lettres Péruviennes" was shortly followed by that of a five-act play, entitled "Cénie." It is in prose, and after its first run of several nights at the Théâtre Français, retained favor for a number of years as one of the stock pieces of that establishment. "Ziman et Zenise" and "Phaza," one-act dramas, were written for and performed by the juvenile members of the court of Vienna. Unfortunately, Madame de Graffigny was so extremely sensitive that an unkind criticism or epigram—and the age was prolific of both—wounded her deeply. Her play,

“La Fille d’Aristide,” which was not so successful as “Cénie,” gave rise to one or two of those silly jests that so often did duty for *bon-mots*. The *amour propre* of the authoress suffered so much that she became seriously ill, and was compelled to lay aside her pen—then employed on another work—and it does not appear that she ever resumed it, except for the benefit of private friends.

It is surprising to meet with so extreme an instance of sensitiveness in one—herself a critic—who so thoroughly comprehended the vivacity and levity of the French character,\* and knew that the age, with all its boasted learning and philosophy, was but the “golden age of commonplace writers”—as Villemain describes it—and that though satire, as a contemporary authority (D’Argenson) remarks, *marchait toujours, il marchait à vide*.

Philosophers of the most advanced opinions met in Madame de Graffigny’s *salon*. Such men, for instance, as the Baron d’Holbach and the younger Helvetius. Both wealthy, of epicurean tastes (the former especially professing atheistical opinions), and whose works, “Le Système de Nature” and “De l’Esprit,” produced some few years later on, were denounced as diabolical productions, and burnt by the public executioner. Yet both these so-called philosophers were amiable, kind-hearted, and benevolent men. If they spent much in luxurious living, they expended almost as much in kind and generous acts towards the needy. None sought a service from d’Holbach, or claimed aid

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\* Zilia, in the “Lettres Péruviennes,” characterizes the French as composed only of fire and air—having escaped unfinished from the hands of the Creator, she imagines, while the more solid ingredients for the organization of the human mind were preparing.

from him, in vain. If, in his dinners and suppers, he strove to vie in costliness and elaboration with the banquets of Lucullus, none the less did he vie with that noble Roman in the humane and compassionate feeling he exhibited. It is not recorded that he took him for his model, though possibly he may have done so.

There resided at this time with Madame de Graffigny a very attractive young lady, Mdlle. de Ligneville, who, with a fair share of beauty, possessed also the advantages of a cultivated mind, an amiable temper, and much liveliness and wit. She was Madame de Graffigny's niece, and what in modern phrase is termed "highly connected;" numerous also, being one of a family of twenty-two children. Many adorers would willingly have sought her in marriage; but when her legion of brothers and sisters was mentioned, also the hopelessness of any expectation of a dowry, candidates for the honor of her hand shrank back, and Mdlle. de Ligneville seemed likely to remain Mademoiselle to the end of her days. It, however, began to be remarked that M. d'Helvetius, no longer satisfied with unfailingly visiting Madame de Graffigny on her usual days of reception, was falling into the habit of looking in on other occasions, to make polite inquiries concerning her health.

Frenchwomen do not like these unexpected calls—it upsets all their plans. Be they whom they may, they prefer to know when to expect their friends; and to a literary woman like Madame de Graffigny the intrusion was especially annoying. But Helvetius was perfectly content to pass an hour or two *tête-à-tête* with Mdlle. de Ligneville in the *salon*, insisting that Madame, her aunt, should not on his account be re-

quired to leave her study. Soon it appeared that this dangerous young philosopher (Helvetius had fascinating manners, and was remarkably handsome) came not to philosophize, but to seek healing balm for a wounded heart.

The philosopher was in love; and being utterly indifferent to the number of brothers and sisters the fair Mdlle. de Ligneville might bring him, as well as equally indifferent to her want of a dowry, he, at one morning *tête-à-tête*, asked her to be his wife. She did not refuse, and her family, of course, rejoiced greatly; while many an anxious mother, with daughters waiting for a husband to unbar the convent gates, turned pallid with envy—happily concealed by the fashionable thick coating of rouge—when they heard at what shrine the wealthy and fastidious Helvetius had been worshipping.

Hitherto so singularly prosperous in his worldly career, he was no less fortunate in his choice of a wife. Voltaire, with whom philosophers were all "great men," or addressed by him as such, wrote to the great man Helvetius some poetic lines of congratulation, and begged to be laid at the lady's feet; where he would certainly have fallen had he been present.

To the philosophical reunions and splendid banquets, at which the most distinguished men of the time assembled, was now added the attractive *salon* of the charming Madame Helvetius. There, during the four months she and her husband were accustomed to spend every year at their magnificent hôtel in Paris, women of high birth and beauty, of literary and artistic tastes, or remarkable in the social circle for their brilliancy, loved to congregate.

It is singular that one who professed, and so fully carried out, the epicurean doctrine that the happiness of mankind consists in pleasure should have owed to the favor of the pious, self-denying Marie Leczinska the opportunity of accumulating the immense wealth which enabled him to scatter his benefactions with so unsparing a hand, and to enjoy life so luxuriously. He was the son of the physician Helvetius, who recommended bleeding in the foot as a probable means of saving the life of Louis XV. when, during an illness which attacked him at the age of nine years, his death was hourly expected. Other physicians in attendance were strongly opposed to it; but Helvetius persisted in his opinion that it would have a favorable result, and explained his reasons for doing so. This converted two of his medical *confrères*, and his advice was followed. The king experienced relief from the operation, as Helvetius had foreseen, and speedily recovered.

The service rendered the king does not appear to have had other reward than the grant of an apartment at Versailles—that he might be near at hand to watch over the royal patient's health. His circumstances continued as before, very far from affluent. He was a kindly-natured man, and gave much time to visiting the poor in their sickness, and those frequently recurring calamities—pestilence and famine—which so thinned the population of France. When, six or seven years after, the king married Marie Leczinska, and her household was formed, Helvetius was appointed physician to the queen. Hearing of his former services to the king, she procured him a pension of 10,000 *francs*.

The younger Helvetius, as he grew up, rejecting his

father's profession, was desirous of emulating Voltaire. He began very early to write poetry, or rather short pieces that passed current as such, in that rhyming age. Subsequently he brought out a tragedy, "Le Comte de Fiesque;" then took to the study of Locke, whose ardent disciple he professed himself. So highly did he appreciate his own productions that he expected their merit would insure his reception as a member of the Academy of Caen—having been educated in the college of that city. Being but a mere youth, his pretensions were laughed at; but a year or two later influence was made for him, and, though still under the required age, the object of his ambition was attained.

On returning to Paris, Fontenelle became his idol. Madame de Tencin then bestowed her patronage on him, and in her *salon* he made the acquaintance and secured the friendship of Montesquieu and Voltaire, as well as the good graces of Madame du Deffant and other philosophical ladies. There was an elevation in his sentiments, a refinement in his manners, that pleased these leaders of society, and gained him favor also with his father's friends, who were of the court circle of the queen. He already acted on his epicurean principle, in the pleasant fashion of making himself agreeable to others in order to secure happiness for himself. And the principle was successful in its results. The queen became interested in the fascinating son of her worthy physician, and obtained for him the place of farmer-general, which gave him at once, at the age of twenty-three, an income of 100,000 *écus* and the opportunity of accumulating millions.

But Helvetius did not follow the exacting, grinding system of most of the farmers-general. Often he

is said to have defended the cause of the oppressed people against the exactions of the Compagnie des Fermes. His office necessitating frequent journeys to the provinces, he was always accompanied by some needy friends, to whom it might be agreeable as a pleasurable excursion—as he travelled *en grand seigneur*, and fared sumptuously every day. He was fond, too, of giving pensions to those who would do him the pleasure of accepting them. Marivaux, the dramatist, received one of 2000 *francs*. In return, he often behaved with the utmost incivility towards his benefactor—his generally unrestrained ill-temper and discontent arising from his setting a higher value on his plays than the fashionable world, whose favor he anxiously sought, seemed inclined to award them. His excessive rudeness to Helvetius being, on one occasion, particularly remarked, the latter replied, “Oh! I overlook that, for the sake of the pleasure he gives me by accepting a small annuity.”

Helvetius had held his place thirteen years, when it occurred to him that marriage would contribute to his happiness. He was also delighted to find that he would have the further pleasure of making the young lady very happy on whom his choice had fallen, quite independently of his riches, though, to use Dr. Johnson's expression, he was “rich beyond the dreams of avarice.” Strange to say, he thought himself rich enough, and before he married resigned his “*charge*.” His wonderful moderation astonished M. Machault, Contrôleur des Finances. “So you are not insatiable?” he said. Most of the farmers-general *were* insatiable, and Helvetius's resignation of so extremely lucrative a post was probably a solitary instance of the kind.

It must be left to the imagination to picture to itself all the splendors of the wedding of Mdlle. de Ligneville and the wealthy epicurean philosopher. After receiving the felicitations of his friends and entertaining them in princely style, he and his bride left Paris for his favorite estate and château of Vore, in La Perche. There he hunted the wild boar and followed the roe, for he was fond of the chase, and made everybody happy around him. Or he passed his mornings, as we are told, in meditating and writing; preparing, in fact, the work that, inspired by Montesquieu's "Esprit des Lois"—of which Helvetius desired to express his opinion—was afterwards to cause so great a sensation in literary society, and to give such a shock to his royal patroness. That work Madame de Graffigny pronounced "made up of the sweepings of her *salon*, and a dozen or two of her people's *bons-mots*," but the philosophical world attributed it, in great part, to the caustic and atheistic pen of Diderot.



## CHAPTER XXXII.

L'Hospice Pompadour.—A Royal Visit to the Hospice.—Charles Parrocel.—The Flemish Campaigns.—Abel François Poisson.—The Marquis d'Avant-Hier.—The Little Brother.—Le Comte de Maurepas.—The French Navy.—The King becomes Sallow.—Le Comte d'Argenson.—Madame de Pompadour, as Minister.—Brother and Sister.—Le Docteur Quesnay.—A Remedy for Low Spirits.—Lessons in Political Economy.

To celebrate the military prowess of Louis XV., Madame de Pompadour, after the battle of Fontenoy, founded at Crécy an hospital—or, rather, an almshouse, with infirmary attached to it—for the reception of sixty poor aged invalid men and women, whose needs were attended to by twelve of the Sisters of Mercy of St. Vincent de Paul. The château and domain of Crécy, near Abbeville, were a recent present from the king; but to obtain the necessary funds for the establishment of her hospital, the marquise had privately sold a part of her diamonds to Rambaud, the court jeweller, for near 900,000 *francs*.

When all its arrangements were complete, the hospital was intended to come as a surprise on the king; and it was expected that it would be interesting enough to dispel his *ennui* for awhile. Already, however, he noticed the unusually long and frequent absence of Madame de Pompadour from Versailles; and the oppressiveness of *ennui* would probably have soon yielded to a twinge or two of jealousy. But it chanced that the Comte de Vauguyon, who, it should

be remarked, was one of the queen's intimate circle, had been paying a friendly visit to the fair *Châtelaine* of Crécy.

On returning to Versailles, court etiquette required that he should make his bow to the king. Always more anxious to peer into the private concerns of his courtiers, than to give any attention to business of State, Louis' persistent questioning—for he saw there was a secret of some sort—led to the "Hospice Pompadour" being made known to him rather earlier than its foundress had proposed. Yet it may have been a mere *ruse*, to which the pious M. de La Vauguyon had seen fit to lend his countenance.

Whether or not, this charming piece of intelligence served its purpose, as a new sensation for the king. For, some two or three days after, as the marquise, among her workpeople, was giving her final directions, and, like an able woman of business, examining with her builder the construction of the dormitories, and seeing everything put into the very best order, the cracking of postilions' whips was heard. Soon there followed the sound of a bugle; then the roll of heavy carriages; the trampling of horses, coming nearer and nearer, until the royal retinue stopped before the Hospice Pompadour, and Louis XV. alighted.

He was in hunting dress, for there was good sport to be had in the wide domain of Crécy; and the king proposed sojourning there for two or three days, as the guest of the beautiful *châtelaine*. Besides his usual travelling attendants, he was accompanied by M. Philibert d'Orry, Comptroller of the Treasury;\*

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\* M. d'Orry, who had held his office fourteen years, was immediately afterwards superseded—M. Machault, an able minister,

l'Abbé de Bernis, the *protégé* of Madame de Pompadour; and M. de Berryer, Lieutenant of Police.

Never, perhaps, did the king more truly express satisfaction with any of Madame de Pompadour's numerous acts of kindness and benevolence, than with this asylum for the aged and afflicted poor. She had proposed to dedicate it to him, designated as "L'Hospice Louis XV.;" and not the least of its merits, in his eyes, was that his private purse had contributed nothing towards it. M. de La Vauguyon had announced it as L'Hospice Pompadour, and that name, by Louis' particular desire, it retained.

Having completed her thank-offering for the victory of Fontenoy, the indefatigable marquise, as a lover and a patroness of the arts, determined to celebrate the valor of the king in a series of battle-pieces. He had been present, in the next campaign, at the victory of Laufeld, where, as before, the Maréchal de Saxe had commanded in chief. Signal successes at Bergen-op-Zoom had followed, and the siege of Maestricht had opened the way for peace. Charles Parrocel was therefore summoned to attend the marquise. He was the son of the famous Joseph Parrocel, who painted the battle-pieces, representing the so-called conquests of the *Grand Monarque*. Charles had studied his art under his father, and painted well, in the same style; but with the disadvantage of never having been asked to perpetuate on canvas the deeds of arms of any royal hero.

Within only two or three years of his death, fortune favored him with the opportunity of transmit-

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but a friend of the favorite, and more complaisant, taking his place.

ting his name to posterity, as the worthy pupil of the elder Parrocel. For it was then he was commissioned by Madame de Pompadour to compose a series of scenes from the Flemish campaigns, in which, as a victor, the figure of the king should be prominent. She was probably influenced in her choice of a painter by her brother, though her own drawings and engravings evince the possession both of skill and judgment. He, however, was but lately returned from Italy, where, accompanied by Custrin, the engraver, and Le Blanc, the antiquary, he had been travelling with that able architect, Soufflot, for the completion of his artistic studies.

Abel François Poisson was a young man of remarkable abilities. He was four or five years younger than Madame de Pompadour, and extremely modest and retiring. Of principles of rectitude rare in those days, he was painfully sensitive to the dishonor attaching to what most persons thought the brilliant position of his sister. On the other hand, her favor with the king had procured his nomination to a post of influence, which, as he knew, would equally have been conferred on him had he possessed none of those qualifications that so eminently fitted him for it; or the tastes which made its duties so congenial to him. It was a post that brought him into official relations with the first artists of the day—painters, architects, sculptors, and most men of any artistic or literary eminence in France. Consequently, he had in his hands the bestowal of much patronage, and as the king also personally esteemed him, adulation beset him on every side.

In vain, however, were the solicitations of the courtiers or of Madame de Pompadour in favor of

their *protégés*. He refused to ask anything of the king that did not concern his own department. The scruples of conscience from which he so often suffered, he quieted by a determination to merit the office he held, faithfully discharging its duties, and never employing, or recommending for employment, any one of whose merit and ability he was not first fully assured.

He was created, at the age of nineteen, Marquis de Vandières. On his return from Italy, the appointment of Surveyor of Buildings to his Majesty was conferred on him. He was then but twenty-three, and both the friends and the enemies of Madame de Pompadour subsequently acknowledged that by the ability and aptitude he displayed, and the manner in which the functions of his office generally were performed, he had proved that no worthier choice could have been made. His title of De Vandières somewhat annoyed him; though with others he made a jest of it, as Le Marquis *d'Avant-hier*. It was changed by the king to De Marigny, or another title was conferred. Of this latter he said, "The fishwomen will now call me Marquis des Mariniers, and rightly so. Am not I a fish by birth?"

Madame la Marquise was not always quite pleased with "the little brother," as she called her tall, handsome young brother. "He wanted tact," she said; so much so, that at times she almost regretted she had been the means of placing him in connection with the court. He would withdraw if he saw her at the theatre or the opera, to avoid hearing unpleasant remarks. This annoyed her. He passed his time, however, chiefly with artists, musicians, and men of letters. But sometimes he attended amongst the throng who paid

homage to her at her toilet. Her keen eye then often detected the subdued displeasure, and extreme disdain, with which he listened to the fulsome compliments of the servile herd of flatterers cringing around her. The king had adopted Madame de Pompadour's epithet of "little brother," when speaking familiarly of De Marigny. From that time, whenever he was seen in the galleries of Versailles, immediately a crowd of courtiers surrounded him; so eager to claim his friendship; so interested in all his projects, and in whatever works of his own he had in hand.

Referring to these troublesome attentions, and the unwelcome homage paid him, "If I chance," he would say, "to drop my pocket-handkerchief, twenty *cordons bleus* will immediately contend for the honor of picking it up." Millionaires of La Ferme générale offered their daughters in marriage; while to his *parvenu* escutcheon of De Marigny he might have added the thirty-two quarterings of an ancient house, had he chosen to cast his eyes on the daughter of a noble for a wife. Despising this adulation, cringing, and fawning, he retained his simplicity of character unperverted; appearing at court with a sort of "proud embarrassment," and remaining honest and honorable in the midst of corruption.

His susceptibility was often wounded by the scurrilous epigrams levelled at him by the Comte de Maurepas, Minister of the Navy; the Navy being almost non-existent. Maurepas' relative, M. de Saint-Florantin, had held, with little credit to himself, the office of Surveyor of Buildings, now so satisfactorily filled by De Marigny; hence De Maurepas' vexation. His levity and indiscretion were proverbial; but when, turning from the brother, Maurepas attacked the

sister, with equal scurrility and with epithets far more offensive, she, who professed to condemn these licentious doggerel sallies—which passed for wit in the tavern circles where the sottish Piron and Panard presided—at once put an end to them. M. de Maurepas was required to resign his important appointment as the head of an imaginary navy, and to retire to his château, if he had one, there to repent of his folly.

At that time the office of Minister of the Navy was hereditary in the Phelippeaux family, and Jean Phelippeaux, Comte de Maurepas, had succeeded to it at the age of fourteen. The youth of the minister was of little consequence; his post had become a sinecure. Neglect had almost annihilated the French navy. During the administration of Cardinal Fleury, the ships of war were left uncared for, to rot and perish in the ports.

“Sire,” said the Maréchal de Belle Isle to Louis XV., when an invasion of England was projected, “I could immediately raise an army of five hundred thousand men to defend France against the nations of Europe combined; but where to find five thousand seamen to man the few ships that are left us to contend with an English fleet, I know not.”

For twenty-seven years Maurepas had been at the head of this flourishing department of State. His frivolity had often amused the king, and in the course of these years of leisure he had written songs of the Pont-Neuf without number; scandalous histories; epigrams in rhyme, which, for vulgarity and obscenity, might vie with the platitudes of Piron (now so admired by our great English wits of the nineteenth century). The buffooneries of Maurepas had, how-

ever, ceased to raise even a languid smile on the still handsome face of the royal *ennuyé*.

A rival had crossed the path of the *Ministre de la Marine*, and Louis soon began actually to yawn at the very sight of *Maurepas*. Perceiving that his favor was on the decline, he tortured his flighty brain to give animation to the desultory talk called transacting business with the king. Yet he was not a little surprised when he received his *congé*. Probably he would have been even more so, had he known that the deterioration of the king's fine complexion was one among the many private reasons that induced his dismissal. Day after day the *marquise* exclaimed that "his majesty was losing his fine complexion and getting sallow." *Maurepas'* inaptitude for business produced the weariness, she thought, that occasioned those jaundice tints. No improvement, however, took place until the *Pompadour* ministry was formed.

One obnoxious member only of the old cabinet yet remained, the *Comte d'Argenson*. His influence, though far less than that of the *marquise*, was still powerful with the king. He had become accustomed to the count, and Louis' indolence, and a certain timidity that accompanied it, made him ill at ease with new people. The *Duchesse de Châteauroux* had demanded his dismissal, as a condition of her return to *Versailles*. The king promised compliance. But her illness ensuing in death, *d'Argenson* retained his office; the king not sharing the *duchess's* resentment. So unwilling was Louis to part with his minister, that although there were few requests he would have denied his present beautiful mistress, he prayed her to do him the favor not to urge him again on that point. *D'Argenson* made himself very agreeable to the king,



though he was the declared enemy of his mistress, and a favorite of the Jesuit party of which the dauphin was the head. The result of the king's unwonted firmness was a truce between the mistress and the minister.

In her private study the affairs of the nation were fully discussed, and intricate business of State explained to her. Her great intelligence, and ready and acute perception of the difficulties, or varying aspects, of a question in the course of its discussion, and their bearing on the political situation of France, as concerned both her domestic policy and relations with foreign countries, were remarkable. They won for her many friends, and as many admirers of her mental gifts, among the men of ability, the aid of whose counsels she sought, as they raised up enemies among those who had not expected to find an able minister of State in an accomplished, fascinating woman—ambitious only of homage, as they imagined, and of enjoying the poms and vanities of a court.

It was the duty of the king to work with his ministers, and he possessed sufficient ability and judgment to have been something more than the mere cipher he was in the council chamber. But mental indolence made him averse to trouble himself with the affairs of his kingdom. Madame de Pompadour sought to counteract this by taking advantage of any opportunity, as regarded either time or a favorable mood of mind, of placing before him a digest—clear, precise, succinct—of every important question in State affairs. She was careful before all things not to weary him; and she had the talent of rendering her conversation with him on the business of the nation interesting, easy and pleasant.

“Women, only,” remarks *Capefigue*, “are quick to discern the joys and the weaknesses of the human spirit, and the shades which escape serious minds.”

The life of *Madame de Pompadour* was a life of labor, thought, and care, eventually undermining her health and bringing her to a premature grave. We know, of course, that the real object of her unceasing exertions was the retention of political power, the keeping of the sceptre of France firmly in her grasp. This only could be done by retaining undiminished her immense influence over the weak mind of the king, who was surrounded by flatterers of both sexes, all eagerly watching for her downfall. But he had allowed her to place her yoke on him, and seemed well content to wear it, for he appreciated her great talents for governing, and the industry which he himself had not. The business of her life was therefore to make her yoke so easy, so pleasant, and, from habit, so necessary to him, that an effort to shake it off should be an effort that would give him real pain.

The young *Marquis de Marigny* interfered not at all with what may be termed the political life of *Madame de Pompadour*. There was in that respect a wide gulf between them; but in their talents and accomplishments, and their love of the arts, their tastes were in harmony, and the private circle of the brother was, with few exceptions, that of the sister. Her happiest hours were probably those they spent together in her private apartments with artists, musicians, and men of letters. Sometimes with only the friends of their earliest years—*Pâris-Duvernay* and the *Abbé de Bernis*, or with *le Docteur Quesnay*; the founder and patriarch of the philosophical sect, the “Economists”—whose doctrines, as applied to the adminis-

tration of government, were professed and advocated by the elder Mirabeau, in his "L'Ami des Hommes," and afterwards by Turgot and Malesherbes.

Quesnay was Madame de Pompadour's physician, and had an *entresol* apartment assigned him in the palace as a residence. Though inhabiting Versailles or, when in Paris, the splendid Hôtel d'Évreux (now Élysée Bourbon—so interesting in its historical associations, and which the marquise had lately bought of the Comte d'Évreux for 650,000 *francs*) Quesnay meddled with no court intrigues. He paid his daily visit to his patient, whose then languid spirits were but the forerunners of the gloom and sadness of a mind diseased. Though brilliant in society, when alone with her thoughts she was oppressed with melancholy deeper than the king's. She had fully awakened from her dream of finding happiness in the splendors of a court, and as the favorite of the king.

"The spell has lost its power," she writes to the Comtesse de Nozilles, "Now I find in my heart only a great void that nothing can fill."

Quesnay, who was eloquent on no other subject than rural economy, did his best to cheer the spirits of his fair patient by explaining to her the advantages to be derived from free trade in grain, and the impetus commerce would receive when his system should be practically adopted. Turgot, Diderot, Helvetius, d'Alembert, and Marigny, would often discuss the theories of Quesnay for hours together, in his *entresol*, and, when in Paris, far into the night. Some three or four years later, the Marquis de Mirabeau became one of Quesnay's most zealous disciples.

The economic theory of Quesnay was a singular remedy for low spirits, but appears to have been gen-

erally successful with Madame de Pompadour. She confessed that, although willing to respond to his anxious wish that she should become a proselyte to his views, yet she could never comprehend what he called his "chain of axioms," so irresistible, as he told her, in their evidence.

The "net products" also—the result of his own and d'Alembert's careful calculations—remained an unsolved mystery to her. But the eagerness and warmth of the philosophic doctor, when he got well into his subject, greatly amused his patient, and the conclusion of her lesson in political economy was usually a hearty laugh. As a physician, this may have pleased him; though, as an enthusiastic "Economist" he was probably disappointed.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

Rousseau's Prize Essay.—Rousseau, un Vrai Genevois.—Rousseau's Theories Refuted.—Voltaire et L'Homme Sauvage.—A Morbid State of Feeling.—Thérèse Levasseur.—Jean-Jacques' Second Essay.—Diderot and Jean-Jacques.—The Trowel *versus* the Pen.—“Le Diable à Quatre.”—L'Homme Sauvage in Society.—“Jean-Jacques, Love your Country.”—An Abjuration.

DIDEROT had published, in 1746, his “Pensées Philosophiques,” an atheistical work, for which he was shortly after arrested and conveyed to Vincennes. Confinement had so irritating an effect on the violent temperament and ill-regulated mind of this great genius, that there were symptoms of the probability of his imprisonment ending in madness. To avert so great a catastrophe, the Lieutenant of Police suggested his discharge, and after some little hesitation in high quarters, Diderot was set at liberty. His “Letters on the Blind, for the Use of Those who See,” then promptly appeared, and procured him a lodging in the Bastille; where the philosophic brotherhood visited him, apparently without restraint.

Among them, in 1749, Jean-Jacques Rousseau daily presented himself—his sympathy for the captive philosopher, inducing him to make an application in his favor to Madame de Pompadour. No notice was taken of it. Indeed, the writings of Diderot, except perhaps his notes and criticisms on the pictures and

painters of his day, are as repelling as he was himself, personally, coarse and repulsive.

It was on one of his daily visits to the prisoner of the Bastille, that Jean-Jacques, chancing to take up the "Mercure de France," saw an announcement, of the Academy of Dijon, proposing as the subject of a prize essay, for open competition, "What is the Influence of the Sciences and Arts on Morality?" Rousseau determined to compete for this prize; but was undecided whether to depreciate the sciences, or to exalt them; to denounce the arts as fatal to virtue, or to maintain that their influence was beneficial to mankind. On his way back to Paris he sat down under a tree to reflect on the subject. The result was the sophistical essay which gained the prize of the Dijon Academy and brought him prominently into notice in Paris. That Rousseau wrote from conviction, of course, no one believed. Yet it was necessary that arguments in support of such sophisms, as the delights of savage life, and the blissfulness of ignorance, should be, or appear to be, forcible—commending themselves to the imagination, at all events, if not to the understanding. Being drawn from the imagination, they imparted a sort of fervor and eloquence to the advocacy of his novel views of happiness. Yet it is probable that the essay would have passed altogether unnoticed, had he treated his subject more rationally. His style was not like that of Voltaire, in itself attractive; for, as recently observed,\* no Swiss writer of eminence is so little French in his style as Jean-Jacques. "He was a true Genevese."

When his essay appeared, the French philosophers

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\* In the *Revue Suisse*.

and society generally, believed that they had attained the highest point of civilization and social refinement ; and that it was attributable to the immense development and progress of the sciences and arts. Rousseau's affectation of seeing in them only the source of every ill, amused that novelty-loving age, as a pleasant jest ; none the less pleasant because disguised by an air of seriousness.\* Judging from his subsequent conduct, and from much that he afterwards wrote (for previously he had professed to love Italy, "Europe owes to her," he said, "all the arts"), Rousseau's one great object was to draw attention to himself, and, before all things, to be talked about. And he succeeded.

Henceforth, or at least for a time, until he became too savage, he was to be met at the sumptuous dinners and suppers of Baron d'Holbach, and Helvetius. Also, at the reunions and bachelor dinners, given weekly by the young Comte de Frise—a nephew of the Maréchal de Saxe—to whom Baron Grimm was then secretary. (De Frise had inherited a princely fortune while yet a mere youth, and dissipated nearly the whole of it in gambling and riotous living ; small-pox soon put an end to his libertine career.) It was then that Jean-Jacques became so intimate with Grimm, who was musical and accomplished, and, being much sought after in the society of the court, often procured for his friend employment as a copier of music. For Rousseau had given up a situation of cashier, obtained

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\* King Stanislaus, however, amongst his poets, and surrounded by painters and sculptors, whom he had invited to his court to embellish the palaces and public buildings of Nancy and Lunéville, was indignant with Rousseau, and took up his pen to reply to his arguments and to refute them.

for him by the nephew of Madame Dupin, and adopted this precarious method of gaining a living.

To Voltaire—of whom little was seen in Paris after the death of Madame du Châtelet, and the still more afflicting circumstance of Crébillon being received with favor by Madame de Pompadour—Rousseau sent a copy of his essay. In a letter of thanks containing many flattering expressions, he jestingly remarked, that while reading it, he had felt the strongest inclination to walk on all fours. "No one ever tried so hard," he says, "to make beasts of us." Rousseau took great offence at this. He had before been an admirer of Voltaire; henceforth he became his enemy.

Though everywhere welcomed with much cordiality, he was far from being at ease in the society he now frequented. Under a modest and reserved exterior, and timidly polite manners, there lurked pride, distrust, envy, and resentment. The luxurious banquets of d'Holbach; the elegancies that surrounded the witty and refined Helvetius, displeased Jean-Jacques. There was no geniality in him. Unaccustomed to any society but that of the vulgar and illiterate Thérèse Levasseur and her mother, he felt conscious that he was out of his place, and sat moodily silent in those animated circles; glancing around him furtively and askance, yet keenly observant of all that took place. "No one," says Marmontel, "ever more persistently put into practice the miserable maxim, 'One should live with one's friends as if they were some day to become one's enemies,' than did Rousseau."

The indigence into which he had fallen on his return from Venice in 1745, may have greatly contributed to deepen his naturally morbid state of feeling,



which with increasing years seemed to grow deeper still; embittered his life; alienated his friends, and deprived him of much of the legitimate reward of his literary labors.

Whether owing to his business occupations, or that he had not been able to obtain for it an advantageous hearing, "Le Devin du Village," if finished, had not yet been produced. Some of its songs and airs he was accustomed to sing and play, wherever he found a harpsichord to accompany him. Generally they were thought pleasing and pretty, though Rousseau's voice was thin and harsh, and little calculated to add any charm to his music. Duclos, however, spoke of it favorably to Madame de Pompadour, and, soon after Rousseau's Dijon success, his operetta was performed at Versailles, and again at Fontainebleau.

All who were present, amongst whom were the queen and the princesses, were charmed with it. The marquise sang the airs, which became popular; and the king was so well pleased with them that he desired to see the composer. But the composer, though puffed up with vanity at the success of his musical trifle, shrank from an interview with the king, notwithstanding the sharp goadings of Thérèse. Her displeasure with "her man" was expressed with an eloquence that a fish-woman might have envied. She, poor woman, saw a pension looming in the distance, and perhaps her children reclaimed from among "the foundlings." And a pension, at the instance of the marquise, might have been granted, had Rousseau but temporarily dispelled Louis' *ennui* by appearing before him in his Armenian caftan and robes—a not undignified costume, when appropriately worn, though it transformed poor Jean-Jacques into an eccentric figure of fun.

The Academy of Dijon again, in the following year, proposing a subject for a prize essay, "The Origin of the Inequality among Mankind," Rousseau once more took up his pen. The prize was not on this occasion decreed to him. But his generally perverted views, and the plausibility with which he sometimes presented them, together with the singularities of his conduct, sufficed to fix attention upon him. Curiosity was therefore sure to be raised by whatever he wrote. He became the fashion in the *salons*. Society, desirous of taking a near view of the gentle savage, made a lion of him, sought after and courted him.

His head was nearly turned by his imaginary social success. He gave himself extraordinary airs, and sulked and pouted when he thought he was not made enough of. The ladies coaxed and petted him, but laughed at him behind his back; as men might do when flattering a vain, capricious, pretty woman, whose excessive *amour-propre* was ever in danger of being disquieted by any fancied lack of attention and admiration.

He suffered far less in the more congenial society of Thérèse. She recalled him to his senses, when he returned home in a fashionable fit of the vapors. His wounded feelings received but rough treatment from his wife, "in the sight of heaven and by the law of nature," but whom the *salons* refused to acknowledge. Thérèse had feelings also, and was not sparing of strong epithets when she thought of the wrongs he had done her.

Since Jean-Jacques had frequented the *salons* of the great world, he had often chanced to meet the young Marquis de Marigny, who, like himself, though from different motives, and in a different manner, main-

tained a certain degree of reserve in society. Rousseau seems to have felt attracted towards him, and, in his awkward, shy way, inclined to a more intimate acquaintance. Diderot, his former bosom-friend, since his release from *durance vile*, had evinced strong symptoms of jealousy of Rousseau's notoriety. Cold, caustic, also ready to take offence "at trifles," as Marmontel says, Jean-Jacques had become incomprehensible to Diderot.

When, too, he considered the strange doctrines he now put forth, his desire, as it seemed, to found a sect whose aim should be to arrest the progress of civilization; to turn its course backward, as it were—preaching as happiness to men gifted with intellect, a state of nature, what could he think, but that Jean-Jacques was a madman? "That man is a lunatic," he exclaimed. One or other of these men must have been very much changed to have made intimacy, much less friendship, possible between them.

But Diderot was now fully engaged with d'Alembert in preparing for the first issue of the Encyclopædia; while Rousseau, influenced probably by a musical reputation, and a preference expressed for Italian music, had made the acquaintance of Marigny. The young marquis, as Jean-Jacques, doubtless, was aware, was the first to patronize Sédaine, "Le restaurateur de l'Opéra Comique." Sédaine was a stonemason, and a skilful workman, probably; being entrusted with the reparation of the marble fountains of the gardens of Versailles. While thus occupied, he one day contrived to enter into conversation with Marigny, in the course of which he informed him that he purposed shortly to give up the stonemason's tools and take to the pen. Marigny smiled,

"Better keep to the trade you are master of," he said, "than leave it for one you have to learn."

"It is for the Opéra Comique I propose to write," he replied. "Allow me to read to you the play I have written."

Permission was readily given. Sédaine read his piece, afterwards so popular—"Le Diable à Quatre," and Marigny no longer doubted, as he said, the stonemason's ability to use the pen as skilfully as the trowel. The music of his next piece, "Le Roi et le Fermier," was composed by Marigny, and proved a great success. Marigny was an accomplished *amateur*, and Sédaine, it is scarcely necessary to say, became the most popular of the writers of vaudeville and operetta; far surpassing Panard, sometimes called the "La Fontaine of vaudeville," Sédaine's pieces possess an interest quite independent of the music, though he was usually fortunate in his musical fellow-laborers.

Marigny's receptions were especially artistic and literary, without any pretension to philosophism, and were occasionally attended by Jean-Jacques. It was, however, scarcely consistent with his professed opinions on the subject of the sciences and arts, to frequent a reunion composed almost entirely of persons who made them their principal study. It was evident, notwithstanding, that he had a predilection for their society.

Madame de Pompadour was anxious to see this advocate of the life of the backwoods. A special invitation was therefore sent to him, for a reception at which ladies would be present; and Jean-Jacques duly made his appearance. He wore a cloth coat, hazel color, and of the cut then in fashion; linen, fine and white, cambric cravat, without lace, but nicely plaited and

got up by Thérèse; no ruffles; small round wig, no powder; silk breeches, maroon-colored stockings, silver shoe and knee buckles, and cane in his hand—*un vrai petit-maitre*. Though supposed to be always out of health, his complexion is described as ruddy; his features peculiarly Swiss.

On his introduction to Madame de Pompadour, his manner was flurried and nervous. Desirous of playing the bear, he was yet restrained by a wish to behave with politeness to this fascinating and all-powerful lady—the more so, perhaps, that he was conscious of being decked out as if for making conquests that evening. Indeed, some ladies were heard to declare that "*l'homme sauvage*" was really "quite a handsome fellow." "*Le Devin du Village*" was of course the first subject of conversation. Madame la Marquise so much admired "that charming little opera," that Jean-Jacques was delighted. Vanity tore off his bear-skin, and compelled him to behave far more like a civilized creature than was his wont—singing and playing, first at his own suggestion, then at the request of the marquise, several pleasing songs and pieces of his own composing.

It is probable that Rousseau might have acquired a fair reputation as a composer, had he applied himself more steadily to the scientific study of music while in Italy. But he seems to have remained satisfied with the reputation of a clever *amateur*, which his "*Muses Galantes*," and "*Le Devin du Village*," with some few *chansonnettes* and short pieces for the harpsichord had gained him. His introduction to Madame de Pompadour led to no results, as regarded his future career, and shortly after it he left Paris for Switzerland.

"Jean Jacques, love your country," had been his

father's oft-iterated counsel to him in boyhood; and it may have recurred to him when, after an absence of many years, he determined to revisit the land of his birth. The "Citoyen de Genève," as it was his custom to sign himself, was well received by his fellow-citizens. The fame of his pamphlets and music had preceded him. But his public renunciation of the Roman Catholic faith, and return to Protestantism, was more particularly gratifying to them, than those first literary efforts—soon to be succeeded by others that eventually raised a tempest of ill-feeling against him, and caused his ejection from the land that now welcomed his return.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

Anglo-mania.—A New Source of Favor.—The Wines of Bordeaux.—A Present from Richelieu.—Château-Lafitte promoted.—A Challenge to Burgundy.—The École Militaire.—Its Real Projector.—L'Hôtel des Invalides.—The Academy of Architecture.—The Rubens Gallery.—Vernet's French Seaports.—Jean Honoré Fragonard.—The Painter Chardin.—The Queen's Oratoire.—The Winner of the Grand Prix.—Advice to a Young Artist.—An Admirable Plan.—Funds not Forthcoming.

GENERALLY, it may be said, that, throughout the long reign of Louis XV., industry and commerce were slumbering. Yet there were intervals of partial awakening from this state of inactivity, of which the most notable was from 1748 to 1756—the period that elapsed between the signing of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle and the beginning of the Seven Years' War. Considerable progress was then made, as well in the arts and sciences as in the manufactures of the country. In its social aspects, it was also a brilliant period—a bright gleam from the fast-setting sun of the old *régime*—luxury in dress, in furniture, in equipages, everywhere meeting the eye.

In certain circles, inoculated by Montesquieu, Voltaire, and others, with what was termed Anglo-mania, many took the opportunity afforded by the Peace of visiting England. Fine ladies and gentlemen set out for "the tight little island, the land of freedom," and

the refined court of George II., with very high expectations. They returned, alas! with the enthusiasm of their feelings somewhat chilled. In return, foreigners of distinction, and especially Englishmen, thronged to Paris. Young noblemen frequented its *salons*, "to form themselves" in these schools of finished courtesy and perfection of taste.

The Duc de Richelieu, now well on the road from fifty to sixty, and, as some assert, with a deep tinge of red in his nose that annoyed him exceedingly, was still held up as the model of a fascinating libertine. One may learn from Lord Chesterfield's letters how this worthless old rake—for it is he who is alluded to, as achieving so much social success with no higher claims than his fine manners, and his affectation of homage to women—was still courted in the *salons*. Every post he had held throughout his career, whether military or diplomatic, had been conferred for no merit; but was obtained through the intrigues and persistent support of his phalanx of female partisans. But the wars were over, at least for a time, and the worthy duke was now at full leisure to slay ladies' hearts, and to pursue his drawing-room conquests.

At this opportune moment of *fêtes* and banquets, a lucky chance presented itself of increasing his favor with the king. It won him also the thanks of the court, and even of the philosophic band of diners-out. The king, who unfortunately could not be prevailed on to stint his libations to the rosy god of wine, was at this time supplied by the duke with a new sensation of that kind, which also very shortly after became the means of imparting new zest to the Apician repasts of the rich Baron d'Holbach, of Hé-



nault and Helvetius, and the tables of the wealthy generally.

A sudden thought one day struck the languid, melancholy Louis, when Richelieu, after a short, dreary, and almost silent interview, was taking his leave of the king.

“Do your Bordelais vineyards, Richelieu,” he said, “produce any drinkable wine?” and “Le Bien aimé” raised himself from his reclining position, as though reanimated by the mere sound of the word wine.

The duke, recalled, as it were, to the presence of his august sovereign, replied:

“Sire, there are growths of the country which yield wine not exactly bad. There is what they call in those parts ‘Blanc de Sauterne,’ a very palatable wine; by no means to be despised. Then they have a certain ‘Vin Grave,’ which has a strong odor of flint-stone, and resembles Moselle, but keeps better. Also, they have ‘Médoc’ and le ‘Bizadois.’ But there is especially one kind of red wine, which the Bordeaux people boast of and praise so extravagantly, that your Majesty would be much amused to hear them. Were one to give heed to their gasconades, one must suppose that the earth produces no wine that equals it; that it is, as they say, ‘Nectar for the table of the gods.’ Yet this much-lauded wine is neither a very potent nor generous one; though its *bouquet* is not bad. In its flavor there is a sort of indescribable, dull, subdued sting or mordant; and it is not at all disagreeable. For the rest, you may drink as much as you please of it. It sends you to sleep, that’s all; and, to my mind, that’s its chief merit.”

The description of the wines of Bordeaux seemed to satisfy his majesty, but created no desire to taste

them. His favorite sparkling *vin d'Ai* was still, to his fancy, the royal wine, fit for kings and princes, and the fine ladies of his court. Richelieu therefore went his way without any order for claret. Two or three weeks after, however, there arrived at Versailles a messenger of the duke's, from his château near Bordeaux, bringing with him some dozens of the famous red wine so vaunted by the Bordelais. The messenger had been despatched post haste to fetch it from the duke's cellars, that the king's curiosity concerning Bordeaux wine might be better gratified by tasting it.

A cork was drawn. His majesty tasted, and tasted again, after the manner of connoisseurs. He then drank a glass; hesitated for awhile, but pronounced it "a *passable* wine," and the "*bouquet*," as Richelieu had said, "not bad." Half-an-hour's reflection produced a desire to taste again—the king wished to be just. He liked the *je ne sais quoi*, in its flavor, better, and ended the process of doing it justice by liking it remarkably well. After a second bottle, he unhesitatingly agreed with the Bordelais that their Château-Lafitte was fit for the table of the gods; and, higher honor still, fit to grace the table of the *petits-appartements* of the King of France and Navarre. Henceforth to that honor it was promoted.

Its fame soon spread. For it had not been tampered with; not prepared (you understand) by skilful hands, as for the present educated taste of the connoisseurs of the English market. The wines of Bordeaux now took their place on the tables of the wealthy. But until thus brought into favor, through this present to the king of Château-Lafitte from the Duc de Richelieu's cellars, no one would have thought

of offering his guests the wine of Bordeaux—so little was it known or esteemed beyond the district of its growth.

It was doubtless brought forward to play its part at the banquets, public, private, and royal, which in 1751 were given in celebration of the birth of a son to the dauphin. Then Château-Lafitte, publicly representing the vineyards of Bordeaux, was as a herald throwing down the gauntlet of defiance to a rival, maintaining, in the face of all who dared dispute the fact, the pre-eminence of their produce, as bumpers were filled, and the guests, with three times three, drank to the health of Young Burgundy.

The eldest son of the dauphin received at this time the title of Duc de Bourgogne. Louis XV., though disliking his son, was really well pleased at the birth of this child. It seemed to ensure the direct succession to the throne. The enthusiasm of the Parisians also raised his spirits wonderfully. For he was remarkably sensitive to any perceptible loss of popularity, little as he did to deserve the affection of his people. Foreign ministers hastened to Versailles to congratulate the king, and were agreeably surprised at the cordial reception he gave them. The listlessness with which they were usually received, and which was the reason that an audience was so rarely sought of the king, had wholly disappeared. Without throwing aside any of his wonted dignity of manner, his majesty almost condescended to gaiety, and old courtiers declared they had never before seen him so apparently happy.

A series of grand christening *fêtes* took place at Versailles. The queen attended them, and the king was so gracious as to assure her that it would give him pleas-

ure to see her more frequently joining in the amusements of the court, and the diversions of the *petits-apartements*. Paris was brilliantly illuminated for three successive nights, and a sum of 600,000 livres was ordered by the king, in a generous fit, to be expended on public festivities. At the suggestion, however, of Madame de Pompadour, it was disposed of in marriage portions to six hundred young girls, whose claims were to be presented in the course of that year. To celebrate the auspicious event, she, too, gave a dowry, of a thousand francs each, to fifteen of the villagers' daughters on her three estates of Crecy, Bellevue, and the Marquisate of Pompadour, the number, fifteen, being intended as a compliment to the king.

In this same eventful year was founded the *École Militaire*. Historians and memoir writers are far from agreeing to whom the first idea of this noble establishment should be assigned. The dauphin has been named, perhaps because, in his boyhood, he seemed inclined to a military life. Debarred, however, by his position from taking any active command, he yet was interested greatly, it is said, in the training of young men destined for the army. He may have been so; but he would probably have preferred to found Jesuit monasteries and colleges. Besides, no proposal of his, whatever its merits, would have found favor with the king. Some writers have said, "France owes the *École Militaire* to Comte d'Argenson;" others, "Marchault was the real projector of the *École Militaire*;" again, "This institution is mainly due to the brothers Pâris;" and—least likely of all—the sole merit of it has been given to Louis XV. himself.

But of the few improvements and embellishments carried out in Paris during the reign of Louis XV.,

from 1748, as well as of many that were projected and begun, but afterwards, from want of funds or other causes, abandoned, the real originator was the Marquis de Marigny. The idea of the *École Militaire* is said to have occurred to him in the course of a conversation, with M. Marchault and others, on the public institutions founded in the reign of Louis XIV., and particularly the *Hôtel des Invalides*. The subject was discussed at Choisy, at one of the intimate reunions of the Marquise de Pompadour. There, reposing from the cares of government—for nothing was done without her sanction, in any department—she occasionally sought mental recreation in a small circle of congenial friends—intellectual and artistic, as well as many of high rank; for her partisans were numerous in every class of society.

With reference to *Les Invalides*, it was remarked by one of the company, that although it was a noble institution, affording an honorable retreat to the worn-out and needy military man, the boon was still incomplete. It offered him an asylum, after spending the best years of his life in camps; but if there was a family, it rendered no assistance in bringing up a son consistently with the rank and profession of the father. The marquise suggested an establishment for the wives and families of disabled soldiers, and Marchault, who was Comptroller of Finances, set to work to calculate its probable expense. His figures were alarming, and, together with other obstacles he foresaw to its realization, at once put an end to the project.

De Marigny then proposed what he thought a more feasible scheme. This was a royal school or college for the gratuitous support and military education of a certain number of youths, the sons of needy gentle-

men, and especially those whose fathers had fallen in battle in the service of the king. The company was much pleased with this scheme; the marquise was charmed with it; and Pâris-Duvernay, promising to furnish the requisite funds, she determined to bring it under the notice of the king. When submitted to Louis XV., he gave it a most favorable reception. Soufflot was summoned to examine the plans for the building sketched by his pupil, De Marigny. Generally, he approved them, and, with some slight variations, they were adopted. The king fixed at five hundred the number of pupils to be accommodated; and Madame de Pompadour suggested that the site of the royal military college for youths, whom she designated "the hope of the nation," should be chosen as near as possible to the hôtel of the gallant veterans who, equally, were its pride.

De Marigny was an excellent draughtsman. He was desirous of reviving the *prestige* of the French Academy of Architecture, which had fallen into disrepute. At his request, the king re-established it, as it were, by granting new letters patent, and creating, in connection with it, a school of architecture in Rome, thus raising it to a level with the Academy of Painting. The side of the Louvre looking towards the Seine, as far as it was continued during the reign of Louis XV., was completed under De Marigny's superintendence. He would have had the king finish the galleries connecting it with the Tuileries, in order to place there the Musée d'Antiques and Cabinet de Médailles. But useless, expensive, and inglorious wars emptied the treasury, and the works, resumed from time to time, were then entirely discontinued. Louis greatly esteemed De Marigny, and justly so. "He

was a sensible man," he said, "who was worth ten brilliant ones."

In the galleries of the Louvre, from the time of Henri IV. until the great Revolution, apartments and studios were assigned to the principal artists of the day, if they cared to make use of them. There De Marigny might constantly be met with when not employed in the galleries of Versailles. He, indeed, lived almost exclusively in the society of artists, writers, and men of science. It was he who undertook the formation of the Rubens gallery; collecting the works of the great painter from the various palaces in which they were dispersed, and, in some instances, disregarded and forgotten. The public exhibition of pictures and architectural designs, which first took place at regular intervals in the reign of Louis XV. and in the *salon* of the Louvre (whence its present designation), was established at his suggestion. He considered that both art and artists, as well as the public, would gain by it.

He had become acquainted with Joseph Vernet while in Rome, and with his talent for marine landscape painting, by his views of the scenery of Genoa. He now urged him to leave Rome for Paris. Vernet followed his advice, and received from his friend the king's command to paint those views of the seaports of France, so well known through the engravings of Le Bas and Cochin. Fifteen of those paintings are in the Louvre. Vernet was then about thirty-eight, and, as a painter, was at his best. His recent picture, the "Castle of St. Angelo," had greatly raised his reputation. His Italian pictures, generally, are more agreeable to the eye than those painted in France. It may be that the formality of the groups of figures, and the

little variation of scene, impart an air of monotony and coldness to the seaports, especially when several are seen together.

De Marigny, like Diderot, was an admirer of Greuze's "*Scènes de Famille*." "Greuze," wrote Diderot, "is our painter; he has invented moral painting." While Boucher's fanciful productions, then so much sought after by the *beau monde*, he designated "*Paysages de l'Opera*," and his shepherdesses and goddesses, "pretty puppets," with the borrowed grace and dignity of "*figurantes*, with rouge for flesh, and powder for hair." Diderot had little more esteem for Carle Vanloo than for Boucher; yet his portraits are said to be generally good as likenesses. He had the talent, or art, of catching the expression of the sitter.

The young painter who, at the period in question, gave promise of greatest celebrity was Jean Honoré Fragonard. At the age of twenty his picture of "Jeroboam Sacrificing to the Idols," had carried off the academy's Grand Prix de Rome. It was considered a remarkable production of genius—the painter having received but little instruction. He was of a good Provençal family; but at his father's death some litigation took place which resulted in the loss of nearly the whole of his property. Fragonard, much against his inclination, was placed as clerk to a notary. He was then eighteen, and more frequently employed himself in making pen-and-ink sketches of cupids and nymphs and pastoral landscapes, than in writing. This did not please the notary. But he discerned so much talent in these sketchy productions that he recommended the young man's friends to place him with Boucher.

Boucher, then at the height of his fame, as a fash-



ionable painter, took no pupils who were not already tolerably well acquainted with their art. With his pink and blue satin-draped *boudoir-atelier* constantly thronged with nobles, anxious to secure his cabinet pictures at any price he chose to set on them, or to engage his services, on the same terms, for the decoration of their *salons* with some of his inimitable panel paintings of *fêtes galantes*, or those graceful arabesques he so tastefully designed, he had no time for teaching. Boucher's pupils were his assistants, who learned what they pleased to adopt of his style by seeing him paint, and studying the effect of his mannerisms in the pictures retouched and finished by the master's own hand.

Fragonard's sketches were glanced at by Boucher. He nodded his approval of them, and sent the aspiring youth to Chardin, a brilliant colorist, excellent draughtsman, and an admirable painter of still life. Chardin, after looking over the pen-and-ink sketches that had so pleased the notary, put into Fragonard's hands a palette and brushes, and desired him to paint. It was Rembrandt's method, and succeeded so well with Fragonard, that his rapid progress astonished his master. He had, however, supplemented his instructions by visiting, at every spare moment, the churches of Paris, where there were then more fine pictures than are to be found in them now ; and after a diligent study of them, reproducing from memory those that had most particularly struck him.

At the end of six months he returned to Boucher, who was as much surprised at his progress as Chardin had been, and, as pupil without payment, now gladly received him. Another six months glided by. Fragonard had become weary of the grace and dignity

of the beauties of the *coulisses* of the opera, whence Boucher selected his models for his Saint Cecilias and Catherines, and even for the holy Virgin, with which he decorated the Oratoire of the pious Marie Leczinska.\* Fragonard was also ambitious of competing for the Grand Prix of the Academy, though he had not even been received there for the course of study from the model. At that time, 1752, the prize was open to all competitors, and to the astonishment of all, was won by a youth whose studies were comprised in six months' pen-and-ink sketching in a notary's books, six months' use of Chardin's colors and brushes, and six months' study of nature amongst Boucher's theatrical landscapes and *fêtes champêtres*.

Before the young artist set out for Rome, Boucher, who loved Paris far better, took him aside and said, "My dear Frago, you are about to see in Italy the works of Raphael, of Michael Angelo, and other masters of the Italian school; but I tell you in confidence, my friend, you are a lost man if you set seriously to

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\* The king visiting the queen's apartments to inspect Boucher's paintings, fell, as the phrase is, deeply in love with the face of the holy Virgin. To the great edification of the poor simple-minded queen, Louis also fell on his knees before this vision of beauty, and came again to the oratoire more than once to gaze on it. "Was so much loveliness," he asked, "a mere creation of Boucher's fancy?" It was a question for the Lieutenant of Police to reply to. In a few days he was able to do so. The beautiful face of the Virgin was drawn from a living model. She was the painter's mistress, "and," said De Berryer, who owed his office to Madame de Pompadour, "worshipped by him." Louis seemed to reflect. When he spoke again, Berryer replied, "Sire, do not think of it. In such a matter, Boucher is a man to be feared. The *émeute* of the other day" (which had been rather menacing to Berryer) "would be followed up by a revolt."

work to form your style by studying the works of those people."

It was not only as a patron of the artists of his own day that the Marquis de Marigny was distinguished. He could admire the frequently admirable productions of Boucher's facile pencil, painted for Louis XV. and Madame de Pompadour, without being insensible to the superior merit of "those people." Andrea del Sarto's masterpiece, and the "Saint Michael" (on panel) of Raphael—both, from neglect, fast going to destruction—were by Picot's invention, of which De Marigny bought the secret, transferred to new canvas. The levelling of the Champs Élysées, the formation of the Place Louis XV., and the replanting of the Boulevards, were works proposed by him to the king, and for which he obtained his sanction.

Together with Soufflot, he made the plans for the new church of Ste. Geneviève, and those of the *barrières* of Paris. Assisted by the same architect, he elaborated a design for enlarging, rebuilding, embellishing, and draining Paris. When finished, he laid it before the king. The work, he calculated, would take twenty years to complete, and the cost of it he estimated at 30,000,000 frs., or 1,500,000 frs. per annum. It amused Louis XV. to go into the particulars of this scheme; so clearly explained, and rendered easily comprehensible by the eagerness of its advocate to recommend it to his notice.

"I fancy," said the king, "were your scheme carried out, that Paris, already the finest city in Europe, would be a finer one still—certainly more airy and spacious."

"Sire, it would be a far healthier city," replied De Marigny. "There would be less sickness, with proper drainage, pure water, public markets, and wider streets.

The finest buildings in Paris are for the most part concealed by narrow, squalid streets and dilapidated houses. The Louvre, that might be one of the chief ornaments of the city, is hemmed in by mere hovels. More fountains are wanted, more trees should be planted, more theatres erected, and many monasteries suppressed."

"And where, M. de Marigny," said the king, "do you imagine I should find the money you require to carry out your admirable plans?"

"Ah, sire," he replied, "such a thought would never have occurred to your great ancestor, Louis XIV."

"I wish it had sometimes done so," said the king, "it would then have occurred less frequently to me."

It was unfortunate that such scruples should have pressed on the conscience of Louis XV. only when the improvement of his capital, or some similar beneficial object that would have bettered the condition of his people, was in question. He signed orders on the treasurer readily enough for secret service purposes, whose aims and ends, as we know, were not always the most useful or praiseworthy.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

Madame, La Duchesse.—The Promenade de Longchamps.—La Duchesse, in Court Dress.—Complimentary Fireworks.—The Jesuit, de Sacy.—Give Satan his Due.—An Angry Woman's Letter.—“Je le Veux.”—A Perfect Picture of Flora.—The Queen's Toilettes.—I pray you, Sing me a Song.—Grand Triumphant Air.—A very Great Lady.—Alexandrine d'Étioles.—Death of Alexandrine.—Le Comte de Kaunitz-Rietberg.—Désagremens of the Chase.—A Martyr to Duty.—Kaunitz at Versailles.—An Ally of Voltaire.

“His majesty has presented me with six beautiful Arabian horses,” wrote Madame de Pompadour to the Comtesse de Noailles.

These six Arab steeds were to have the honor of drawing a handsome new coach, of which Martin, coachbuilder to the court, was then superintending the completion. Many persons sought permission to examine this latest specimen of Martin's known skill; and of those who obtained it, the greater part went their way filled with envy or indignation.

“I have expressly ordered,” Madame de Pompadour tells the countess, “that my coach may not be disfigured by any of those scenes of gallantry with which it is now the fashion to decorate the panels. It is a fashion I dislike. It is offensive to good taste.”

The king had recently, on the *fête de St. Jean*—the *fête* day of the marquise—raised her to the rank of duchesse. Hence the need of this new equipage, and

a change in her arms; which, from her own designs, were elaborately emblazoned on the panels of her carriage, instead of the fashionable *scènes à la Boucher*. Some of the carriages of that day were really very beautifully painted with mythological or pastoral subjects. It was a caprice that for a time almost superseded the labors of the herald painter; notwithstanding the prevailing fondness for the prominent display of highly wrought armorial bearings.

The coachmaker's art had progressed considerably during the last few years. The carriages were less capacious and cumbrous; also easier, lighter, and better slung.

This had been especially noticed at the last Holy Week promenade of Longchamps, whither the *beau monde* continued to flock. An order of the Archbishop of Paris, in consequence of an accident to Madame de Flavacourt's carriage, through the pressure of the crowd, had closed the Abbaye doors during the celebration of the grand musical "*Office des Ténèbres*". The religious object of this annual promenade, originating with the Orleans family, was therefore at an end. The promenade, however, survived as a yearly rival display of luxury and extravagance, both in toilette and equipage. The name of the fortunate person who generally was considered to have surpassed all others, and to have won the grand prize in this praiseworthy contest, was at that period usually proclaimed.

The new carriage, with the six fiery Arabs gaily caparisoned, would doubtless have borne off the bell. But this was not the sort of triumph our new duchess looked forward to, or indeed would have cared for. She was too prudent, by far, to seek publicly so trivial a distinction. The real arbiter of taste, and the glass

of fashion, we know she then was. We are reminded of it, as we, of these degenerate days, stroll up Regent Street and sorrowfully gaze on the dreary exhibition of painted and glazed cottons, ticketed with her name; wretched imitations of the richly brocaded Pompadour silks. The charming bouquets, and knotted garlands of flowers were either designed by herself, or were the productions of Boucher's fanciful pencil. He was inimitable in creations of that kind; and as inimitably were they reproduced by the looms of Lyons.

Boucher painted the duchesse in her court dress—that splendid toilette and tasteful combination of satin, embroidery, laces, and flowers, in which she was presented anew to the queen. It was on her elevation to the much envied distinction of the *tabouret*, or right of being seated in the presence of, and near to, royalty—and being kissed on the forehead by the princes and princesses of the blood. The dauphin is said to have performed his part of that ceremony with very ill grace—by no means *à la Richelieu*; or with that air of gallantry towards *le beau sexe*, so characteristic of his royal father, and which had won him the distinctive appellation of “perfect French gentleman,” in addition to that of “*Le bien aimé*.”

The dauphin had recently recovered from an attack of small-pox; of a less malignant type than was too frequently the case in those days. Yet it had been severe enough to raise fears for his life, and to leave its disfiguring traces on his countenance. During his illness, Madame de Pompadour had evinced much sympathy towards the young dauphine and the queen. The danger being past, and the convalescence of the dauphin publicly announced, she celebrated the event by a *fête* with fireworks. The latter con-

sisted of an allegorical device, in which a dolphin was represented gaily disporting himself in his native element, while around were sea-monsters spitting forth fire at him. The monsters were intended to represent the small-pox, and other attacks of illness to which the dauphin for some years had been subject. Gradually they disappeared from the piece, leaving the dolphin alone in his glory, diverting himself with his sports and gambols; which typified restored, even improved, health—in spite of the illness that had threatened to undermine it.

Perhaps an explanation was necessary rightly to understand this, for the dauphin interpreted it differently. He saw in this allegory only an insult. The head of the dolphin he fancied a caricature likeness of his own. In the fire-spitting monsters, which the people, not seeking for a meaning, admired immensely as a spectacle, he discerned an intimation to them that he was abhorred of all who were about him. That the profligate Louis XV. disliked his bigoted Jesuit son was no secret, probably, to the dauphin himself. Yet Madame de Pompadour's solicitude respecting him, whether real or affected, during his illness, does not appear to have displeased the king. It was as if in recompense for it, he, in that same year, created her a duchess. Her elevation at the same time to the honor of the *tabouret*—though the pretensions of the Duchesse de Luynes were set aside by the king in her favor—gave rise, however, to some difficulties.

It was necessary she should confess, partake of the sacrament, and receive absolution. The queen consulted with the marquise on the subject. The learned Père De Sacy also visited her, and after a long inter-



view, during which "he conversed with charming grace," seemed inclined to the opinion that the *pros* outweighed the *cons*, and that it would be possible to absolve her. But, Jesuit-like, he would not commit himself to any positive decision. He would reflect; he would consult; he would take ten days or a fortnight to make up his mind, he said, insinuatingly—at the same time allowing it to be understood that any obstacles he had raised, or scruples he had suggested as likely to be raised by his Order, would disappear during that interval. As it is right that every good Christian should give even Satan his due, no less Christian-like is it to give the benefit of a doubt even to a Jesuit. Possibly then, just possibly, the good father De Sacy may have meant what he said; for the hope was held out to him of becoming the king's confessor. But the strong Jesuitical cabal of the court of the dauphin and the queen, could not well have been defied; influential as he was with his Order, as Procureur Général of Missions. At the expiration of the fortnight, Sacy wrote a long letter, of which the following is a *résumé*:—

"Madame la Marquise,—It is impossible to grant you the absolution you ask for. You desire, so you have told me, to fulfil the duties incumbent on every good Christian. The highest of them is to set a good example. To merit and obtain absolution, your first step must be to become reunited to M. d'Étioles; or at least to quit the court—thus edifying your neighbor, who declares himself scandalized by the favor shown you by the king, and your separation from your husband."

On the back of the letter (returned immediately), she is said to have written as follows:—

“Mon Père,—You are a true Jesuit. You understand me, no doubt, when I tell you so. How you enjoyed the embarrassment and need you imagined you found me in! I know, of course, that it would gratify you much to have me leave the court, and that you think me weak and tottering. But, know this. I am as powerful here as you are, and in spite of all the Jesuits in the world, here I will remain.

“LA MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR,  
“*Dame du Palais de la Reine.*”

It is an angry woman's letter, written on the spur of the moment. Reflection would probably have produced a more dignified reply, and one that should have been more cutting and annoying to the Jesuit. But the expulsion of the Jesuits from France was from that time determined upon, and Madame de Pompadour and their persistent enemy, M. de Choiseul, rested not until they had accomplished their object. All difficulties respecting the *tabouret* were immediately overcome. Madame de Pompadour was judicially separated from her husband. M. d'Étioles, weary of exile, had some time before solicited and obtained permission to return to France. He had even been so wanting in self-respect as to accept a lucrative post offered him by the king; though his circumstances were affluent, and his daughter was provided for by her mother.

The “*je le veux*” of Louis had doubtless smoothed the upward path of Madame de Pompadour's ambition. No obstacles would have confronted her had she been a great lady like, for instance, the insolent De Montespan, whose haughty airs so intimidated the poor little Spanish wife of the magnificent Louis XIV. Marie Thérèse, indeed, began to doubt whether she

were really the queen, and shrank from the overpowering presence of that "splendid creature," her rival, to the seclusion of her oratory, to weep and to pray. The *Grand Monarque* and his Montespan, meanwhile, went through their devotions in public—side by side. Thus, edifying all beholders, and setting them a fine example; which, on the authority of a Jesuit, is the very head and front of Christian duty.

Once indeed, a poor creature of a *curé* did venture to refuse absolution to Jupiter's *grande-maitresse*. "Had the earth opened beneath him," as some people say, the great king could not have been more astounded. He was absolutely thunderstruck at the presumption of this insect of a priest. And it is probable that the poor man would have been "*embastillé*" for the term of his natural life, had not his lucky stars happened to be in the ascendant, while the favor of the haughty marquise was on the wane. It was at the time when the pious and unselfish Madame de Maintenon was working heart and soul to achieve that great work, the salvation of the *Grand Monarque*.

In the present instance, there is no question of punishing, or treating with contempt a poor parish priest with a scrupulous conscience. It is a great man among the Society of Jesus (what a misnomer!) who has presumed to offend a king's favorite, and the society, *en masse*, shall feel her resentment. She, however, seeks as she always does, to propitiate Marie Leczinska and the princesses; and on the morning after her triumph appears before the queen carrying a basket of choice flowers, just received from her conservatories at Belle-vue. It is a present to the queen for the decoration of her apartments. Very charming the duchesse looks in her white muslin *negligée*—a

perfect picture of Flora, that Boucher or Fragonard would have loved to paint. The deep lace on her sleeves is looped back to the elbow with velvet rosettes, displaying the beauty of her arms, as they encircle her basket of flowers.

At no time was Marie Leczinska remarkable for tasteful toilettes. When the becoming Polish fashions had had their day, she adopted whatever the taste and fancy of the reigning belles of the court brought into favor. Of late years she had very injudiciously either discarded or been wholly indifferent to that ornamental setting which every woman needs, though she be a gem of purest ray. The queen had allowed herself to sink into the frumpy old woman, and with her snuff-box beside her—for she often applied to it—and wrapped up in her sad-colored polonaise, and with a *coiffe* on her head, looked ten years older than she was. Now and then, when she went to the entertainments of the *petits-appartements*—as her confessor occasionally allowed—to hear Madame de Pompadour sing, she put herself into the hands of her tiring-women, who usually dressed her very much as they pleased, which was not always the most becomingly.

It is so long since she voluntarily abdicated her rightful position at court, that she is not very accessible to jealous pangs. Yet something of that sort crosses her mind when Madame de Pompadour enters. As she is about to set down her basket, the queen steps forward and prevents her. “She looks so charming with her basket of flowers,” she tells her, “that she must not be relieved of it until she has sung” (of course, in the character of a coquettish village maid) “some appropriate song—one of those pretty *chansons* she has heard her sing in the ‘Devin

du Village,' or other musical piece." Two or three persons of the queen's intimate circle are with her in her chamber. They smile, as if anticipating some amusement.

Madame de Pompadour prays to be excused. She discerns an intention to disparage her; to show her off as a silly, vain woman, eager for admiration, and at whose expense the queen may afford her friends a little diversion. Marie Leczinska persists in her request. Again she is entreated not to urge it—for etiquette forbids a positive refusal to comply with the royal command. But the queen is bent on making her rival act and sing—on making her ridiculous, in fact. And Madame de Pompadour, compelled to sing against her will, is bent on having her revenge.

She perceives there is a harpsichord in the room.\* Placing her basket of flowers on the table, before the queen can prevent her, Madame de Pompadour sits down to the instrument, and, instead of the *chansonnette* she has been asked for, favors the queen and her friends with her grand triumphal air, "At last 'tis in my power," from Lulli's "Armida," allowing them to make whatever application of the words they pleased; and it appears they made the right one. Her musical education had been perfect, and her singing of this grand air was a *tour de force*, of which very few who were not professional singers were capable. The queen had heard her sing it before—never, perhaps, with the same apparent exultant joy as on the occasion referred to. Poor Marie Leczinska!

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\* Young Beaumarchais—then only twenty, gigantic in stature, and remarkably handsome—had just been appointed by the king to teach music to the three princesses—of course, in the queen's apartments.

All the prerogatives of a princess of a sovereign house were at this time conferred by the king on Madame de Pompadour, and all the pomp and parade then deemed indispensable to rank so exalted were fully assumed by her. Except on those occasions when it was her own good pleasure to seek relief in the society of a few chosen friends from the wearisome etiquette with which she was surrounded, she was approached with as much ceremony as the king, even by the members of his family; sharing with him the homage—and probably receiving the larger share—paid by courtiers and foreign ministers to royalty.

The first woman of her bed-chamber was “a young lady of rank.” Her chamberlain and first equerry were men of rank. A Chevalier of the Order of Le St. Esprit bore her train. Collin, one of the procureurs or attorneys of the Châtelet, was her steward, and was decorated expressly for that office, when placed over her household at the Hôtel d'Évreux (Élysée Bourbon). The Marquis de Marigny was appointed secretary of the Order of Le St. Esprit, which conferred on him an exceptional *cordons bleu*, without proofs of nobility.

A handsome pension was given to her father; but he was required to reside at not less than forty leagues' distance from Paris, as his presence at court would have been rather embarrassing. He took up his abode in a pleasant part of Champagne, where he seems to have enjoyed life exceedingly, after the ups and downs of his earlier days, and his narrow escape from being hanged. Her mother had died in 1749, at about the same time as the “sublime Emilie,” when condolences were exchanged between Madame de Pompadour and Voltaire—Voltaire, of course, pouring forth his sor-

row and sympathy in rhymes. Her daughter yet remained to her. Alexandrine d'Étioles was then between nine and ten years of age; a remarkably intelligent child; carefully educated, and giving promise of great musical talent.

Marmontel said of the young daughter of his patroness, "That she was the most *spirituelle* child in France." He was accustomed to read his famous tales, "Contes de Marmontel," to the mother and daughter. While doing so, he assumed, it appears, a certain air of effeminate affectation—perhaps thinking to impart further interest to them. The young lady observed this, and remarked, sententiously, that "M. Marmontel, when he was reading, had too much the air of a marquise." This was repeated to Marmontel, and longer than usual he absented himself from the toilette of the duchesse. When she inquired the reason—for she was much interested in her *protégé*, who, but for her encouragement, would have given up literature—he replied, "That really he was as much afraid of Mdlle. Alexandrine's epigrams as of Piron's." This was, of course, said jestingly, but it shows that there was piquancy enough in the child's remark to annoy him.

Madame de Pompadour had already cast her eyes on the young Duc de Fronsac, De Richelieu's only son, as a suitable *parti* for her daughter. The king approved, and mentioned it to De Richelieu, who replied, "Sire, it would be necessary first to obtain the consent of the family of Lorraine." However, the poor child died in her twelfth year, in the convent of the Assumption, in the Rue St. Honoré. Her death was probably the greatest blow Madame de Pompadour ever experienced in her affections. For one

may believe that she loved power, and loved it to excess, yet decline to give entire credence to such a writer as Soulavie, who, in his untrustworthy "Memoirs," represents her as bereft of all feeling, and a callous, hard-hearted monster. Her ambitious views had included, no doubt, an advantageous marriage for her daughter. Most mothers have similar aspirations.

A project is said to have been on the carpet, at the time of the child's death, for a marriage with a scion of the house of Nassau. And it is not unlikely. Already the wily, Jesuitical empress, Marie Thérèse, who, through her effeminate ambassador, Count Venceslaus de Kaunitz, was kept well informed of all that took place at the court of Versailles, had saluted Madame de Pompadour as "my good cousin." Kaunitz prepared the way for Stahremberg. He had signed for Austria the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, and afterwards remained as ambassador to play the agreeable, when at Versailles, both to the king and Madame de Pompadour. In Paris he resided at the Palais Bourbon, and frequented assiduously the receptions of the Marquis de Marigny, and of the Duc de Choiseul, then appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs.

M. de Kaunitz, notwithstanding his reputation as an able diplomatist, was as much occupied with the cares of the toilette, with the preservation of the smoothness of his complexion, and the delicate whiteness of his hands, as any effeminate *petit-maitre* of the salons, or even as the rose-leaf-tinted beauties of the court. The count was, as the French say, "still young;" or, more poetically, "the last rays of youth" still lingered about him. He had reached his fortieth year—a period of life less terrible to men than to wo-



men. His manners were courtly, and he had, therefore, found favor with the king, who was extremely sensitive on that point. Roughness of character was far more offensive to him than were vicious principles,—he shrank from those in whose demeanor he seemed to detect it.

So devoted to the chase himself, Louis XV. imagined that no one could be otherwise than delighted by an invitation to join the royal hunt. But alas for poor Kaunitz! while striving to appear enraptured with the sport, he was suffering agonies. Too much wind, too much sun—either would be fatal to his complexion, and often there was too much of both. Fastidious ladies might have screened themselves with mask or veil from the attacks of bright Phoëbus or rude Boreas. But in presence of a bevy of beauties—amongst whom were the dauphine (a famous huntress), Madame Adelaïde (the king's eldest daughter), and Madame de Pompadour; all in hunting dress, and, regardless of their complexions, wearing little feather-trimmed *chapeaux à tricornes*—the count was compelled to appear as reckless of exposure as they were, lest, in screening himself from the weather, he should expose himself to ridicule. It would have been like falling into Charybdis in attempting to avoid Scylla.

He had invented a sort of paste which, put, soft, on the hands at night, adhered as it hardened, and remained firm till the morning. When removed, the fairest lady in the land might have envied the lily whiteness of the count's beautiful hands. He had as many rules for the preservation of his health as his beauty; and greatly it grieved his righteous spirit to depart from them. So that, what with his decorative

art and his hygienic system, he may be said to have been a martyr to duty—his duty, as a diplomatist, to his sovereign and his country. Duty alone would have drawn him from his cosy apartment in the Palais Bourbon, and his luxurious private *boudoir*; where, at his ease, in an elegant *robe de chambre* that the Duc de Gêvres might have envied, he penned long despatches, minutely descriptive of all that was passing around him, whether political or social.

Kaunitz was a keen observer. Grimm charged him with extreme frivolity; and the effeminacy he affected justified the charge. But Marie Thérèse put much confidence in him for the carrying out of her views. He had been intended for the Church, but preferred diplomacy to fasting and praying. His advancement had been rapid; for at the age of forty he was at the head of one of the most important of European embassies. The ambassadors' quarters at Versailles did not quite suit his habits; but he was not averse to the dinners and amusements of the *petits-appartements*. Attending the toilette of Madame de Pompadour was a far more interesting pastime to him than that of witnessing the mysteries of the *petit lever* of Louis XV. He, however, contrived to perform both those duties with, as was said, "infinite grace."

He kept the devout Marie Thérèse *au courant* of all that was said, done, and suspected at that favorite abode of royalty; for she liked a dish of court scandal no less than did Louis XV. himself. The count was fond of Parisian life, and was supposed to be deeply tinged with the prevailing philosophism. He was a frequenter of the *salons*, and especially of that favorite resort of the ambassadors, where the whole

of Europe was often represented—the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin.

When Madame de Pompadour sojourned for awhile at her Hôtel d'Évreux, the Comte de Kaunitz was invariably present at her private receptions. While playing the part of a frivolous man of pleasure, he learned to estimate fully the energetic character, great attainments, and natural abilities of the mistress of the weak and incompetent Louis XV. In sharing the Duc de Choiseul's opinion, that Madame de Pompadour possessed many of the essential qualities of an able minister of State, as well as great aptitude for diplomatic negotiation, the count impressed the same view of her character and abilities on the mind of his sovereign. Taking advantage of this, in a way that the empress well knew would prove most flattering to the *amour-propre* of such a woman, she began the famous correspondence which won over to her cause the great influence of *la maîtresse-en-titre*; made France the ally of Austria, and paved the way to the Seven Years' War.

But diplomacy and the cares of the toilette did not wholly engross the time and thoughts of the ambassador. He was a frequenter of the theatres; was intimate with Voltaire, and a great admirer of his genius. To Madame de Pompadour he significantly expressed his regret that prejudice on one side and fanaticism on the other should at that critical moment deprive the court of France of the aid of Voltaire's powerful pen.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

Crébillon and Voltaire.—Voltaire and the Court.—Crébillon at the Toilette.—Rising and Setting Stars.—Adieu, La Belle France.—Clerical and other Cabals.—Lekain's Début.—Voltaire's Pupil, at Sceaux.—“Heavens! how Ugly he is!”—A Stage-struck Painter.—An Unfortunate Débutant.—Belcourt invited to Paris.—Advice to a Young Actor.—Lekain in Despair.—Lekain at Versailles.—A Discourteous Greeting.—A Triumph for Lekain.—A Reform in Costume.—Clairon's Grande Révérence.—Clairon and Marmontel.—A Vexatious Contretemps.

THE fast-waning popularity of Crébillon experienced a temporary revival through the success of his tragedy of “Catalina.” It was, however, a success more forced than real; got up by his friends, with Piron and other enemies of Voltaire at their head, and rather for the sake of annoying the latter than serving the former. For Voltaire, though so immensely superior in talent, and his fame European, was not proof against the shafts of envious mediocrity. He was easily roused to jealousy of even so poor a rival as the aged Crébillon.

Crébillon, it is true, had, on this occasion, succeeded where Voltaire, with all his advantages, and his audacity to boot, had failed. Notwithstanding that he was no frequenter of the *salons*, but a loungee of the taverns, a dweller among the poor, in a humble house in the Marais—with his pipe and his dogs for companions—Crébillon had been well received by the

king. Louis had even condescended to ask him to read a scene of his "Catalina," and declared himself edified by it. "Crébillon," he said, "has far more genius than Voltaire. He is a second Racine." The courtiers echoed these words, and the echo reached the ears of Voltaire. Momentarily Crébillon became the fashion, and, better still for the needy poet, the king gave him a pension. Permission to print his works at the Louvre—"With the approval and permission of the king"—was also conceded to him.

In conversation with Madame de Pompadour, Voltaire appealed, as it were, against this concession. He thought it an injustice while a similar privilege was denied to his own works. And she agreed with the poet. For though fully aware of his vanity, she appreciated his talent, and was amused by his mocking spirit. She had been present at the private representation of "Rome Sauvée"—"Catalina" under another name, and a rival production. It was performed at Voltaire's private theatre in the Rue Traversière—the Duc de Villars playing Catalina, and Voltaire Cicero. She had also heard Crébillon declaim before the king. The old poet was then in his seventy-sixth year. His hair was white as snow, but abundant; his features large, and the expression of his countenance sombre—at times, while reciting, almost menacing. He had a deep sepulchral voice, and much abruptness in his gestures; while his rugged verse became harsher to the ear by his harshness of accentuation.

Louis XV. personally disliked Voltaire, and this feeling was nourished by the clamor of the court. He was bored, too, by the agitated entreaties of poor Marie Leczinska, to whom the very name of Voltaire was a bugbear. Urged on by the dauphin and his

Jesuit surroundings, she came as a martyr to implore, on her knees, that the king would uphold the religion of the State—menaced, as she was told, by Voltaire's return to the court. Madame de Pompadour could not, then, under such circumstances, plead very warmly for her friend Voltaire, or suggest very earnestly that the honors of the Louvre should be conceded to his works. Her object was to keep her august sovereign amused and in good humor; not to thwart him in matters comparatively indifferent. When Crébillon, therefore, made his appearance at her toilette, to offer his thanks for the favors he had received from the king, she received him very graciously, and with many kind words. The old poet prayed to be allowed the honor of kissing her hand. The honor was granted, and Voltaire's jealousy and disgust knew no bounds.

It was wonderful that the strong opposition of the priestly element to his reception by the Academy had been overcome. But, in return, it was resolutely determined to exclude him from the court altogether. He had no longer a Château de Cirey to flee to for rest and consolation; nor did a cordial welcome await him at the Hôtel in the Ile St. Louis—for the sublime Emilie was dead. But he, at least, was now free to wander whither he would; so he turned his thoughts towards Prussia. Frederick's invitations to Potsdam had for some time past been pressing. The circle of philosophers assembled there was incomplete without the brilliant writer, the patriarch of the sect. "Let him come to Potsdam; let him make that home of free-thinkers his abode," and enliven by his presence the suppers of Sans-Souci—that Frederick, by the grace of God, King of Prussia and Elector of Bran-

denburg, may add to these titles the far prouder one—"Possessor of Voltaire."

Yet Voltaire showed no great eagerness to accept this flattering invitation, and had he been more graciously treated at Versailles might, perhaps, have declined it. But while wounded *amour-propre* was still smarting from the preference expressed by Louis XV. for the plays of Crébillon, it received a further stab from some flattering expressions of the great Frederick addressed to the young poet Baculard d'Arnaud, who was then at Berlin. "Arnaud," wrote the king, in doggerel verse—"Arnaud is a rising, Voltaire a setting sun." Of course this was soon on its road from Berlin to Paris, and tarried not by the way. It was duly laid before Voltaire, who, having glanced at it, went off into a terrible rage. "I will go!" he exclaimed, "I will go and teach this king that Voltaire's sun is not yet set." He had already bargained with Frederick for the advance of the sum of 16,000 francs, to defray his own expenses on the journey and those of Madame Denis, his niece.

Louis XV. was then at Compiègne, where a camp was forming, and where the general officers were amusing their sovereign and themselves with military manœuvres, *fêtes*, and grand banquets. For Compiègne Voltaire set out without loss of time. He had no thought of casting off his allegiance to his rightful monarch; therefore, though nominally only a Gentleman of the Bed-chamber, he solicited and received permission to visit the court of Berlin, and to accept any dignity the King of Prussia might confer on him. At Compiègne he found also M. von Raesfeld—an officer in the service of Frederick—who, acting on orders received from Potsdam, had made arrangements for

facilitating the journey of the poet and his niece to the Prussian capital. Thus did Voltaire bid an adieu, a long adieu, to la belle France. But though personally absent, the spirit of the mocking philosopher still hovered over her, and his influence was, perhaps, the more deeply felt.

Louis XV. returned to Versailles. The busy life of the camp had amused him, and relieved him from the worry of domestic dissensions, refractory parliaments, squabbles and differences in the Church, which, no foreign war being now on hand, were, as usual, brought forward to disturb the peace of the kingdom. They were principally fomented by the Archbishop of Paris—Christophe de Beaumont, a man of unconciliating spirit, and an ardent supporter of the *Bulle Unigenitus*—once more thrust into prominence, but now unanimously rejected by the Parliament. The king interfered—the Pope, Benedict XIV., was appealed to. The undignified contention continued yet for some years; in the course of which Louis was prevailed on by Madame de Pompadour to take the bold step of exiling the Archbishop with two or three of the most troublesome bishops, supporters of his arbitrary views.

Cabals prevailed also both in the theatrical and musical world. Disputes ran high between the partisans of Rameau and French music and those of Pergolese and Italian music. Also between those who discerned an actor of merit in the *débutant* Lekain and the supporters of Belcourt, who had been brought from a provincial company to oppose him. Belcourt had a handsome person and agreeable manners, and these were, at that time—for he had but little experience—his chief recommendations. They were sufficient,



however, to place Lekain at an immense disadvantage—his personal appearance being not only unprepossessing, but repulsive.

A contemporary writer, who thought favorably of Lekain's abilities, describes him as of low stature; his legs thick, short, and rather bowed. His complexion red and spotted; mouth large, with thick lips—the *tout-ensemble* of his countenance disagreeable, and his figure ungainly. His voice was hard, grating to the ear, and without modulation; and his action was uncouth. His eyes were his only redeeming feature. They were large, full of fire, and most expressive. He, indeed, seems to have been a striking instance of the great power of the eye's eloquence. His *début* at the Théâtre Français took place on the 14th September, 1750, as Titus in Voltaire's tragedy of "Brutus." Lekain was then in his twenty-first year, and fully conscious of his want of every personal advantage.

The ordeal of his first appearance may have been to his imagination partly divested of its terrors by the success he had achieved but ten days before at the Duchesse du Maine's Theatre at Sceaux. He had played there Lentulus in Voltaire's rival play of "Rome Sauvée." The duchess, who in her earlier days had been considered a good actress, and whose château continued to resemble a theatre more than a royal lady's private residence, was most favorably impressed by the young man's acting. He was a stranger to her; introduced at her theatre by Voltaire, to take a part on that occasion in his tragedy.

"Who is that young actor?" she inquired of the poet.

"Madame," he replied, "he is the first of all actors—Lekain."

She had heard before of Voltaire's talented *protégé* and pupil. Having seen him act, she agreed with the poet that "Lekain is to play" would one day be an announcement that should fill any theatre, whether in or out of France, and, she added, "in spite of his ugliness." But Voltaire could not, or would not, see that. "The tragic soul" and the latent talent which experience was to develop were alone visible to him. Lekain had gained a warm partisan in the energetic and still romantic old duchess. But her partisanship availed him little. He had to conquer his position by courage and patience. His *début* was the occasion of a tumultuous scene. The theatre, the balcony, and the boxes rejected him; "the men of rank and women of fashion" would not look at him, or rather, having looked, turned away their heads, exclaiming, "Heavens, how ugly he is!" and would look no more.

But the critics of the pit were more merciful and far more just. Scrambling with all their might to get nearer the stage (the pit at that period was without seats), and vociferating that they "wanted to hear"—when the laughter and hisses and exclamations of the boxes made the actor inaudible—they cheered him on by their plaudits. One far-seeing individual, bolder than the rest, exclaimed, "This man will be the greatest of the royal comedians!"—a prediction received with peals of laughter by the party of the upper regions, and with noisy demonstrations of approval by the pit. It needed, indeed, a degree of confidence and perseverance possessed by few to face the determined opposition the young actor met with for near a year and a half before he was received as *sociétaire*.

Belcourt, at this time, was performing at Bordeaux.

He had no idea of so soon venturing an appearance in Paris, when he was called upon by the cabal of the *beau monde* to make his *début* at the Théâtre Français, as a rival to Lekain. Both these actors—they were about the same age—had taken to the stage contrary to the wishes of their families and the earnest advice of friends. Both were well educated. Lekain was the son of a jeweller in good circumstances, and Belcourt's father was the portrait-painter Gilles Colson. On leaving the college of Toulouse he was placed, as pupil, with Carle Vanloo, and it was after the frequent performance of a part in the little comedies with which the fashionable painter sometimes amused his friends that young Colson discovered, as he believed, that his vocation was acting, not painting.

Nothing could turn him from this fancy. He neglected the lessons of his master, and got many a scolding for doing ill, or not doing at all, the work assigned him in the studio. But Colson was studying a part, *Néristan*, in which he expected, at one bound, to reach the Temple of Fame. Being reproved by his father, he decamped. By some means he reached Besançon, where he met *Préville*, afterwards so famous. Under the name of *Belcourt*, which he retained as a *nom de théâtre*, Colson made his *début*. His theatrical wardrobe consisted of a black coat, for grand court mourning; a pair of velvet breeches, that had had the honor of being worn by *Mdlle. Clairon* in a part in which she had assumed male attire; a bag wig, trimmed with black lace; and a pair of shoes with red heels and paste buckles.

*Néristan* was to take Besançon by storm. But, alas for his high aspirations! when the *débutant* appeared before the audience his confidence entirely

forsook him. He became paralyzed with fear. He was a well-grown, handsome youth of eighteen. His appearance pleased, and he was encouraged by applause. At last he began his part, speaking scarcely above a whisper; but recovered his voice a little as he went on. In the scene where Néristan throws himself at the feet of his lady-love, Belcourt had regained in some degree his composure. Gracefully and energetically he fell on his knees, but, as ill-luck would have it, an accident occurred, at that precise moment, to the velvet garment that had belonged to Mdlle. Clairon, who was less robust than its present wearer. The consequence was an effect on the audience wholly different from that he had intended. The house rang with shouts of laughter, and the sadly humbled *débutant*, overwhelmed with shame and confusion, beat a hasty retreat.

Three years had elapsed. Belcourt was at Bordeaux, where he played "*les jeunes premiers*," much to the satisfaction of the citizens, and was highly esteemed for the excellence of his private character. The Duc de Richelieu had seen him perform at Bordeaux. To please the ladies who exclaimed against the ugliness of Lekain, he succeeded in getting together a powerful party to induce the handsome Belcourt to visit Paris, and, as a rival to Lekain, to make his *début* at the Français. The rage not only for the theatre, but for acting, was then so general that, following the example of Versailles, almost every hôtel of any pretensions gave private theatricals. It was at the theatre of M. de Clermont-Tonnerre that Lekain's talent was first noticed, and in a play called "Le Mauvais Riche," written by that same Baculard d'Arnaud who, complimented by Frederick, was the

immediate cause of Voltaire's hasty journey to Prussia.

Lekain had played the principal part, and, as represented by him, the author was astonished at his own creation. He mentioned the youthful actor to Voltaire, speaking of him as a prodigy. Voltaire's curiosity was roused, and, after seeing him in Arnaud's play, he sent for Lekain. As was his custom, he received him with extended arms, and, embracing him with enthusiasm, exclaimed, "Thank Heaven for creating a being capable of exciting in me the deep and tender emotions I experienced while listening to such miserable trash as Arnaud's verses!" He advised the young man to cultivate his talent for his own pleasure and recreation, but to avoid the stage as a profession. "It is a noble one," he said; "but here, in France, hypocrites have branded it with disgrace." But Lekain heeded not this advice; like Belcourt, he was convinced that his vocation was acting. Voltaire probably had the same conviction, for forthwith he took Lekain under his protection, and instructed him at his private theatre in the principal rôles of his own tragedies.

Voltaire was not present at the *débuts*. The strong feeling of the court against him may have increased the opposition to his *porté-à-terre*. Belcourt appeared first as Achille in "Iphigénie en Aulide," and as Leandre in "Le Babillard." Notwithstanding the admiration of the ladies for "such a handsome man," the critics of the pit pronounced him inferior to Lekain in tragedy. The adverse cabal alone supported Belcourt, while the people crowded in to see Lekain. His superiority was frankly acknowledged by his rival, who desired to return the next day to Bordeaux.

Those who had brought him thence would not hear of it, and the *débuts* went on. Lekain played *Cædipus* with great applause, and was received "on trial," at a yearly salary of 1200 frs. Belcourt, who it was thought might, perhaps, succeed Grandval, was received for "high comedy;" but poor Lekain, with only his tragic soul and his fine eyes, continued to meet with so much opposition that, despairing to overcome it, he thought of leaving France and accepting an engagement offered him in Prussia.

The Princess Robecq, conjointly with Voltaire, dissuaded him from leaving. He had studied diligently during the sixteen months he was kept, on trial, on his forty pounds a year. With experience, the faults that the critics at first had noticed disappeared, and his great talent became very strikingly developed. His pronunciation was perfect, which was not always the case with many of the best actors and actresses of that day. But the more his merits became evident, the more did envy and jealousy strive to disparage him. Yet even among the actors there was one (Belcourt) who, weary of the intrigues and cabals carried on both in and out of the theatre, called out energetically, "If you are not willing to receive him as your equal, you may certainly receive him as your master."

Opposition, at last, came unexpectedly to an end. The actors were commanded to play at Versailles before the king and the court, and Lekain asked permission of Grandval to take the part of Orosmane.

"My friend, you would ruin your prospects entirely," said Grandval.

"I am willing to risk that," replied Lekain.

"Well, in that case I consent; but bear in mind I

warned you," said Grandval, perhaps thinking he was acting as a friend.

The day so anxiously looked forward to by Lekain is arrived. King, queen, princesses, Madame de Pompadour, courtiers, and ladies-in-waiting are assembled in the royal theatre of Versailles. Many of this goodly company have not seen the new actor, against whom so pitiless a storm has been raging. This has raised curiosity, and Orosmane's entrance is eagerly awaited. He appears. There is a general movement of surprise. "Ah! how ugly he is!" meets his ear (one would have expected more courtesy from great ladies of the court). But he had foreseen this; he is accustomed to be thus greeted. If he feels it more than at other times, it is only in increased determination to conquer.

As the play proceeds, and the interest of the scene is unfolded, the audience becomes silent and attentive. Soon the actor is forgotten. Whether he is ugly or handsome no one then knows. It is in Orosmane and his sorrows they are interested, and for whom the tears are flowing from the eyes of beautiful women. Lekain has triumphed over prejudice; and many of those subdued fair ones who had exclaimed so eagerly, "Ah! how ugly he is!" are now fain to say, as on several occasions was afterwards said, "Ah! how handsome he is!"

Lekain was received as associate of the Comédie Française as no other actor, before or since, ever was—by the king's command. "He has made me weep," said Louis XV., "who scarcely know what it is to weep. I receive him." It was vexatious to detractors, no doubt; but submission was imperative, for his majesty added, "*Je le veux*"—a short and ready way

he had of settling vexed questions, of cutting, as it were, the Gordian knots of discussion: perhaps not always with general satisfaction; but in the present instance there were few who did not mentally respond "Amen" to his *dictum*. None perhaps rejoiced more in the success of Lekain than the man who had been set up by his opponents as his rival. Belcourt and Lekain were firm and attached friends to the end of their career. They began it together, and like their lives it had a similar ending.

The French stage owed much to Lekain. He has been called "the restorer of costumes," and has not less deserved that of "benefactor of comedy and comedians." He succeeded in putting an end to the custom—so unfavorable to the actor, so destructive of scenic effect—of allowing a portion of the audience to appear on the stage. A row of seats was taken from the pit to accommodate those who had patronized the scenic benches. It was a great gain to the actors generally—an immense one to Lekain; and it was only fair that he, to whom no favor at all had been shown, should succeed in securing for himself a clear stage. By degrees—being seconded in all his reforms by Mdlle. Clairon, Belcourt, and one or two others—the actors were prevailed on to discard their red heels, paste diamonds, and court dress generally, for the proper costume of the character represented.

Lekain is said to have been absolutely hideous in the dress and turban of Genghis Khan. But that signified not. By his immense talent he soon overcame the first impression. Had he played it as a cavalier of the Henry IV. period, or in the grand costume of the court of Louis XV., the absurdity and his ugliness would have been uppermost in the mind; but



in turban and oriental dress Genghis Khan alone was thought of. To sink his own personality was his constant aim. That made him so great an actor. He loved his art, and wished Lekain to be forgotten in the person he represented.

Is anybody old enough in these days to recollect Madame Rachel? If so, he recollects Phèdre. Her dress, in this character, was a reproduction of the classic robes in which Mdlle. Clairon—discarding the *panier*, the plumes, spangles, and frippery that Phèdre had before appeared in—made, it may be said, a second *début*, and received an ovation surpassing any triumph she had hitherto known:

Mdlle. Clairon was then about thirty, when a handsome woman is as a rose in its fullest beauty. She was eminently the tragic muse—not tender and pathetic like Mdlle. Dumesnil—but grand, sublime. The grace and dignity with which she entered and retired, when on the stage, made her sought after by the great ladies of the court; who took lessons of her in “*la grande révérence*.” The most apt of her pupils is said to have been the young Comtesse d’Egmont, Richelieu’s only daughter, married to an old man, rich and with numerous quarterings, very gratifying to her father; but she, poor girl, found an early grave, the victim of an absorbing, romantic passion for a younger and less richly endowed suitor.

Mdlle. Clairon was also accustomed to read with Mdlle. de Richelieu—receiving for each visit twenty-five *louis a’or*. The duke’s carriage was always in waiting to convey her home; the duke’s coachman as regularly receiving from the magnificent actress ten *louis d’or* as a *pourboire*.

Marmontel was at that time the very humble slave

of Mdlle. Clairon's caprices. He had lately been seriously ill, and the great actress—imitating Adrienne Le Couvreur's attentions to Voltaire—had beguiled the weary hours of his convalescence by reading to him the "Arabian Nights." She had given him, also, a room in her hôtel; Madame Geoffrin, whom he had displeased, having withdrawn from him the privilege of occupying a small apartment in her residence; though her *salon* was still open to him. Marmontel was much indebted to the talent of Mdlle. Clairon for the success of his plays, in which the fire of genius burns but dimly; for, as observed by a French writer, though Marmontel may be considered a distinguished writer, his place is among those of the second rank.

Caprice might sometimes prevent his fair friend from doing her utmost with a part that did not greatly take her fancy. But at no time did she need the stimulating beverage whence Mdlle. Dumesnil seemed to derive the pathos and tenderness that created so much emotion in her audience. The chance of an overdose was, however, more fatal to an anxious author's hopes than the caprices of the actress's dignified rival. The due proportion of water omitted from her draught, the gentle Dumesnil had, on more than one occasion, become extravagantly energetic, ludicrously lachrymose, and, instead of the tears she was accustomed to draw from a sympathetic audience, was saluted with derisive shouts of laughter. An accident of this kind occurred on the first representation of one of Marmontel's plays. The poor author was in despair on witnessing her eccentricities and the noisy mirth they occasioned. But Mdlle. Dumesnil being a favorite actress, her patrons pardoned her; and at the next representation she made the *amende honorable* to Marmontel—

securing, by her fine acting, a favorable reception for his play. For his obligations to Mdlle. Clairon he was made to pay largely. Her carriages and horses, her hôtel in Paris, her château in the country, and general extravagance made large supplies of cash needful. Funds sometimes failed. Then Marmontel's friendship was put to the test, and a severe one too; for his own resources were small, and he was compelled to accept favors from friends to enable him to supply the temporary needs of a lady who probably never dreamed of repaying the sums he had borrowed for her use.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

A Musical Squabble.—A Latter-day Blessing.—Jean-Jacques on French Music.—Rameau Converted.—Tweedledum and Tweedledee.—A Question of State.—The Grand'chambre Banished.—“Dieu Protège la France.”—Birth of the Duc de Berri.—The Harbinger of Peace.

“THE queen’s corner” and “the king’s corner” were two hostile camps, defiantly facing each other from opposite sides of the stage of the Opéra de Paris—the battle-ground on which they nightly contended for victory. Those who ranged themselves under the standard of the queen were the allies of the Italian composer, Pergolese, and his “Bouffons,” or company of Italian singers. The combatants who supported the king for the honor of France (and, indeed, the contention was carried on so rancorously that it threatened literally to end in a combat) were for upholding the supremacy of French music and the superiority of native singers. Lullists and Ramists, who some years before had engaged in a similar struggle for pre-eminence, now formed but one camp. For Lulli, though by birth an Italian, had lived in France from boyhood to old age, and acquired there his first notions of music. France had always claimed him as her own, and in his feelings and habits he was essentially a Frenchman.

The bitterness of spirit evinced on both sides, in this Franco-Italian musical squabble, is really difficult

to realize. The cause seems so insignificant, in comparison with the energy so perseveringly expended upon it. It, however, helps to an understanding of the utter frivolity and idleness of the society of the period, and the dearth there must have been of excitement, when every tea-cup storm caused so great a commotion in the world of fashion. It was not only the belles of the *salons*—pardonably weary of knitting and knotting and embroidery, and of the same dull round of chit-chat, *thé à l'Anglaise*, and scandal—who welcomed any little breezy diversion of this kind. The philosophers also, the regenerators of mankind, actually put aside for awhile their encyclopædical labors, and entered heart and soul into the musical quarrel.

Every one had in his pocket his treatise on music, or a letter of advice or remonstrance to Rameau or Pergolese, for which he vainly endeavored to get a hearing in the *salons*. What if he knew nothing of music? had never given it ten minutes' thought in his life? He, nevertheless, might gratify himself by writing an essay upon it, though no one was likely to read it, and express his opinion on the subject, though no one might care to hear it. Unfortunately there existed not then that latter-day blessing, a legion of newspapers, so obligingly "opening their columns to the thorough ventilation" (if that be the proper nineteenth-century phrase) of any subject of general interest, or even of no interest at all. This "institution of our times" was then but meagrely developed. Otherwise every one might have said his say in his "Jupiter," "Pallas," "Saturn," or other favorite luminary; and with the proud consciousness, too, of a world-wide circulation being given to his utterances. Whether he could reckon on being as widely read might

have been as problematical as in these days, or as getting a hearing then in the *salons*; where everybody was willing to talk, but no one to listen.

Jean-Jacques, who had some musical ideas, though he was not the great maestro he thought himself, of course wrote a letter on the subject. It was ludicrously violent, and its logical conclusion was as follows: "The French have no music, and cannot have any; or should they ever have any, it will be so much the worse for them." Rameau's partisans were violent also. He himself was far more moderate. His idea was not so much that Italian music was less scientific than the French, as that the French language did not readily lend itself to the vocal expression of florid Italian music—a succession of rapid roulades and an overwhelming torrent of notes. Others—among them Madame de Pompadour, one of the few qualified to give an opinion—while acknowledging that much of the singing was very agreeable, yet detected a great want of harmony. The Italian music was considered to fail also when attempting concerted effects, which, from being overwhelmed by a multiplicity of notes, the ear could not seize, the effect produced being merely a great noise.

Yet the Opéra Bouffe gained ground rapidly. "La Serva Padrona," the music by Pergolese, the libretto by Goldoni, became an established favorite; the melodies were so lively and natural, while the singers, though comic, were graceful, easy, and elegant. Louis XV. adopted the opinions, musical as well as political, of Madame de Pompadour. But as she often visited the Opéra Bouffe, and greatly patronized the Italian, Petrini, who had invented the pedal harp (which entirely superseded the guitar, and was

also for several years a formidable rival to the harpsichord—then waiting for the improvements that were to give it the name of forte-piano), it was inferred that she was not insensible to the charm which Rameau himself confessed he found in Italian music.

Opposition to the Opéra Bouffe gradually subsided. Either the contending parties were weary of the strife, or it had lost its zest when the two great authorities, Rameau and Madame de Pompadour, became more than reconciled, as it appeared, to the innovation. The latter sang the airs and made them popular among the ladies, now so devoted to their harps. Rameau, whose well-earned fame suffered no diminution from the favor shown to Pergolese, was then seventy-one. He was accustomed to say that, if he were thirty years younger, he would go to Italy and study the new school of music, and that Pergolese should be his model; but that at threescore and ten it was too late to strike out new paths. He, however, continued to plod on in the old one, and lived to the age of eighty-three. His theoretical works were highly valued, and contributed greatly towards the advancement of musical science in France.

But while this furious musical hubbub was at its height, the wrathful contest at the Théâtre Français had risen to a white heat. From Paris to Versailles no subject was discussed with so much interest and vivacity as the rival claims of musicians and actors. Suddenly the dancers bounded into the fray; and it was on this wise. Many persons, who, like Dean Swift on a similar occasion in England, thought it "strange that such difference there should be 'twixt tweedledum and tweedledee," had forsaken the Opera for the Français. There, indeed, silence was often

obtained by the sheer force of Lekain's great tragic acting; the opposition of his enemies fading away before it. Or if the tumult exceeded the limits which the file of soldiers with fixed bayonets, that invariably surrounded the pit at that period, thought allowable, the police stepped in, and, under the protection of the military, arrested the offenders.

The play ended, the ballet began, and, pleasing all parties, had become exceedingly popular. The receipts of the opera-house, never a thriving establishment, though subsidized by the government, began to fall off. The directors thought to remedy this by prohibiting the representation of ballet at the Théâtre Français, and accusing the managers of an infringement of their privileges. The "comédiens du roi" regarded this grievance as a question of State, and remonstrated against the pretensions of the Académie de Musique, in a memorial addressed to the council of government. Not meeting with the ready interference in their favor they had expected, they closed their theatre. "If they were not to dance, they would not act." This step is said to have added greatly to the arduous duties of the Lieutenant of Police. Crowds assembled, clamoring for admission, demanding the play, but especially calling for the ballet.

As the doors continued closed, the military dispersed the people; the rougher portion of whom rambled about Paris or filled the taverns. M. de Sartines, then Lieutenant of Police, was a great advocate for establishing new theatres; a proposal that met with immense opposition from the three already authorized by the State. He was accustomed to double the watch throughout the city during the three weeks of the theatrical vacation. Misdemeanors, he said,



and even serious crimes, were so much more frequent when the theatres were closed. He considered that they kept the idle and ill-disposed out of mischief, and that it was better for the honest artisan to go to the play than the tavern. His manners and morals, he fancied, were likely to be improved there. Others, however, were of opinion that, although lessons of virtue might be received at the theatre, impressions of vice only were carried away. In this dilemma, two or three of the principal comedians were deputed to wait on Madame de Pompadour, requesting her influence to obtain from the Grand'chambre an edict authorizing the Théâtre Français to represent ballet without let or hindrance from the Académie de Musique.

But the Grand'chambre itself was in a state of rebellion, and was banished to Pontoise, then to Soissons, and public business was at a standstill. Commanded by the king to return to the capital and resume its functions, the Grand'chambre declined to obey. The kingdom was, in fact, in a state of anarchy; yet singularly enough it was rich and flourishing. "If France is prosperous under the rule of such a sovereign as Louis XV.," said Benedict XIV., "there can be no stronger proof of the watchful care of Providence over his people." Benedict, who was more sensible and rational than most of the popes, and who disliked the Jesuits, had been applied to by the king to settle the distracting differences in the Church. He had striven to conciliate opposing parties; to explain away, though not very successfully, some objections of the Parliament on the subject of the still troublesome Bull. But the Bull continued for some time as lively and prankish as ever, until,

happily, a *matador* was found to give him his quietus; and, when finally disposed of, a song of triumph was chanted over him, and it was not exactly a eulogy.

Gayety and thoughtlessness are so characteristic of the French that trifles light as air will often suffice to arouse them from any temporary depression. The king was, perhaps, as striking an exception to the common rule as could have been found in his kingdom. At this time the feeling between him and his people had become reciprocally so adverse that the general situation of affairs—aggravated by the arrogance of the exiled Archbishop of Paris, who played the martyr—began to wear a menacing aspect. Louis' fits of melancholy and remorse grew deeper; and all the efforts of Madame de Pompadour to chase away his despondency fell short of their usual effect. He began to perceive that even she had lost something of her accustomed gayety. "Madame," he said, "if you do not recover your spirits, I shall have to dance and sing snatches of song to make you merry."

Fortunately, at this crisis, the dauphine gave birth to a son—the Duc de Berri—afterwards the unfortunate Louis XVI. He was born on the 23d of August, 1754. *Fêtes* and rejoicings banished the prevailing gloom and discontent. The Opera and the Théâtre Français found it convenient to forget their disputes, and to open their doors to crowded audiences. The king took advantage of the birth of this child to put an end to all rigorous proceedings against his rebellious parliaments and refractory clergy. A sort of general amnesty was proclaimed; celebrated by balls, illuminations, and fireworks; grand banquets at Paris and Versailles; operas, French and Italian, and grand ballets, in which the future career

of the infant duke was shadowed forth, by *entrechats* and *pirouettes*, as one of happiness and glory. His nativity was cast, and, alas for the credit of the prophets! no cloud, even so big as a man's hand, could be discerned on the peaceful horizon, to indicate that the deluge—which even Louis XV. foresaw looming in the murky future—should descend on the head of this poor child and engulf him in its desolating torrent. Never was so grand a christening: in splendor the festivities, public and private, far surpassed those that took place at the christening of the first-born. This child seemed to come into the world as the harbinger of peace to France, and to be received by both king and people as a pledge of their reconciliation, and the cessation of the domestic troubles that had recently so agitated the kingdom.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Diplomatists in Conference.—An Old Custom Revived.—A Projected Dethronement.—Les Abbés Sans Fonction.—Babet, the Flower-girl. — Drawing-room Priestlings. — A Pertinent Quotation.—“ Le Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis.”—La Duchesse de Choiseul.—The Abbe Barthélemy.—Marmontel's Plays.—“ Les Funérailles de Sésostris.”—The Shadow of Favor.—Marmontel Consoled.—The Comte and the Maréchal.—Frozen-out of Versailles.

COUNT STAHPREMBERG had succeeded M. de Kaunitz as minister plenipotentiary from the empress-queen to Madame de Pompadour. His conferences with the all-powerful lady and her *protégé*, the Abbé de Bernis, ended in an alliance between Austria and France, and a determination to declare war against England, who had agreed to aid Prussia by the payment of a considerable subsidy. The king gave up entirely to his mistress the negotiation of the preparatory treaty; afterwards to be submitted to the Council of State, and approved and signed by himself. It is not here that its stipulations need be enlarged upon. It suffices to mention that the agents of the “high contracting parties,” for the better concealment of their objects from those members of the government who were opposed to an Austrian alliance, met at Babiolle—the *bijou* country-seat of Madame de Pompadour—and there, in her *boudoir*, mutually made known and discussed the views and pretensions of their respective sovereigns.

The jests and gibes of Frederick of Prussia contributed no doubt to the readiness with which both Louis XV. and Madame de Pompadour entered into the views of Marie Thérèse, and determined also the Empress Elizabeth of Russia to assist in the attempt to dispossess him of Silesia. France was to be rewarded for her contingent of 24,000 men, with "Belgium as far as Antwerp," and the extension of her frontiers to the Rhine. Austrians and French, united, were to take possession of Hanover; the electorate remaining in the hands of the French. But while Madame de Pompadour was engaged in diplomacy, the king at Choisy was besieged by the great ladies of the court; waylaid at every turn; beset wherever it was possible to meet him. The "*longue amitié*," as the ten years' reign of Madame de Pompadour was beginning to be called, had lasted long enough, in the opinion of the ladies in waiting; who naturally were anxious that the king should select her successor from the class to whom the honor, from right of usage, belonged.

At this time, too, a custom introduced by Louis XIV., but which did not survive him, probably because of the extreme youth of his successor, was renewed in consequence of the Court of Justice and the parliaments refusing to reassemble for the despatch of their public duties. It was that all petitions, either requesting favors or complaining of wrongs or abuses, should be made personally to the king. This was burdensome, indeed, to one who, besides his natural indolence, was increasingly subject to attacks of profound melancholy, from which neither his favorite courtiers nor the utmost efforts of Madame de Pompadour could rouse him. During her absence, tender-hearted ladies greatly availed themselves of the revived custom, to

appear before the king as suppliants for unfortunate persons whose wrongs they were desirous of bringing under his notice.

Many an ambitious husband, also, put forward his wife to plead for place or promotion; believing that her beauty would prevail, while merits or claims of his own would be disregarded. His majesty was "mortally weary" of the persistency of the fair petitioners who sought to inspire him with an interest in the objects of their real or feigned solicitude, while seeking admiration for themselves. He was fast falling into a state of despondency and gloomy devotion, when these court intrigues, whose aim was to dethrone her, recalled Madame de Pompadour to Choisy. The count and the abbe, meanwhile, betook themselves to the Luxembourg, to the apartments occupied by Duclos—historian of France—to prepare there, unmolested, the plan of alliance for presentation to the king in council. It was signed on the 1st of May, 1756.

The Abbe de Bernis, who had been admitted to take part in the discussion and preparation of this treaty of alliance, was then Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and had represented France at the courts of Vienna and Madrid. His rise in the world had been rapid, and had astonished no one, probably, more than himself. Fortune had turned her back on him while he was modest in his aspirations, and had coveted only small favors. But when he made up his mind for a higher flight, the fickle goddess faced round, gave him her hand, and at a bound he attained wealth and fame. He was the son of a country gentleman, and was born at St. Marcel d'Ardichel. His father had ruined himself by obstinate litigation concerning the right to a

valueless portion of ground. De Bernis was one of those abbés "*sans fonction*" who owed their position to the abuses that sprang up in the Church at the time of the regency.

The younger sons of gentlemen, with little or no fortune or fixed means of subsistence, received the tonsure, put on the dress of an abbe, and at once formed part of the ecclesiastical body. Many such abbés figured in the *salons*, frequented the most libertine circles, and, generally, led dissipated lives while waiting for fortune to throw in their way an eligible sinecure—an abbacy, or priory, that did not necessitate residence. These were at the disposal of the king, who would often bestow one at the solicitation of some beauty to whom a gay abbe of the *salons* may have been paying his court. In an instance given by M. Bungener of the prattle of the fashionable *salons*, there occurs the following:

"Ah! my dear Abbe! good-evening. Is your abbacy a good one?"

"Tolerably good, madame."

"Six or seven *livres*' income, perhaps?"

"About ten or twelve, madame. The Abbe de Saint-Maur has an abbacy too."

"Indeed! He is a rabid encyclopædist."

"What does that prove?"

"That he has plenty of brains, certainly; and that abbacy had better support a man of genius than a fool."

And so thought Madame de Pompadour, for it was to her that De Bernis owed his rapid rise from a poor rhyming abbe *sans fonction* to a full-fledged cardinal and royal academician. She is said never to have been able entirely to suppress laughter when she saw

the little fat abbe of former times in the scarlet stockings and hat, robes and laces, of his Eminence, with twelve tall lackeys, in scarlet liveries, following with solemn faces this bundle of ecclesiastical frippery. In his *sans fonction* days he had been generally known by the sobriquet of "*Babet* the flower-girl," from the resemblance of his round, fat, pink-and-white face to that of the little rotund flower-girl who sold flowers at the garden gate of the Capucine convent. Voltaire laughed at him, and gave him the name of Margot. But the abbe was a clever man; and his stanzas and madrigals were better than many of Voltaire's, and than most of the large crop of poetic bagatelles that throve so abundantly in those times.

De Bernis' first meeting with Madame de Pompadour was when, a young girl of seventeen, she was invited, with her mother, to a ball in celebration of the marriage of a school companion with M. de Marchais. The abbe seems to have paid her those flirting attentions and compliments that were generally expected from these drawing-room priestlings, and which were rendered in exchange for dinners and suppers that would have puzzled most of them to pay for at a restaurant. Very ceremoniously he begged of Madame Poisson to allow him to make use of her fan a few moments. Babet had probably fatigued and heated himself overmuch in the dance. When the fan was returned, it was discovered that he had written upon it a very gallant and witty impromptu. What more could be required to gain the firm friendship of both mother and daughter?—of course he obtained it.

Had Babet been that day to consult the old fortune-teller? It was one of that class, who throve on the



credulity of superstitious atheism, then so prevalent in Paris, that had foretold him of a great and sudden elevation in the world. Yet he could scarcely hope that it would come from the quarter whither he had been drawn by youth, beauty, and talent to offer his rhymed compliments. He had rather been led to woo fortune's favors at the hands of M. de La Motte, Bishop of Amiens. But M. de La Motte, though not a rigid prelate, was little inclined to bestow his benefices on the rose-water abbes of the *salons*. Yet he gave young De Bernis a polite and smiling reception; chatting gayly with him on the news of the day. Not less gayly did he reply, when his visitor confided to him that he would be glad to be appointed to any small benefice in his diocese which the bishop might then have vacant.

“ Quand on sait aimer et plaire,  
Qu'a-t-on besoin d'autre bien ?” \*

said the bishop, quoting the refrain of one of the abbe's most popular ditties.

Soon after his first introduction to Mdlle. Poisson, l'Abbé de Bernis was reciting odes and singing *chansonnettes*, composed for the occasion, at the marriage festivities of M. and Madame Le Normand d'Étioles. Three or four years passed by. The abbe, who during that interval had been M. d'Étioles' constant guest, then paid his court at the toilet of the Marquise de Pompadour, and of course was not sparing of his songs and madrigals. And very graciously the abbe was received; for, as Marmontel says,

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\* When one knows how to love and to please, what more can he want?

“simple *bourgeoise*, she remained in her elevation the kindest woman in the world.”

But notwithstanding the liberality of her patronage and readily accorded protection to aspirants for literary and artistic fame, none of the poems or other works so numerous dedicated to her achieved the lasting fame of the fascinating work written by the Abbe Barthélemy to please the Duchesse de Choiseul — “*Le Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis en Grèce.*” What are Marmontel’s “*Contes Moraux,*” and the whole mass of stanzas and madrigals of the Abbé de Bernis, compared with the charming offering that Barthélemy laid at the feet of his patroness?

Madame de Choiseul was a pretty little woman, exceedingly fond of flattery. A clever woman, of course. What woman of distinction was not in those days? Her *salon* was decidedly philosophical, and both she and her husband were favorites in the society of the free-thinkers of the De Conti and De Boufflers school. The duke being high in the favor and confidence of Madame de Pompadour, and possessing also the secret of making himself agreeable to the king, what favors might not be obtained by means of that adulation that was so acceptable to the duchess? The *savants* and literary men who frequented her *salons* were never weary of chanting pæans in honor of the little divinity, whose sunny smiles and good graces they so earnestly coveted.

Her fantastically dressed negro dwarf; her mischievous marmoset; her King Charles spaniel; her rose-ringed parroquet, and other pets of her *boudoir*, had each and all found poets to sing their praises and extol their beauty. “The little white feet” of the fair duchess herself had inspired odes innumerable.

But the choicest offering hitherto laid at those little white feet was the historical tale she had commanded the abbe to write, and which he read to his duchess. He read, it would seem, as well as he wrote. His style, so lucid, so eloquent, with a *tournure de phrase* that charms and fascinates, pleased her so well that she would have his book read to her a second time; and declared that it would gratify her to listen to it a third.

Yet Barthélemy was less fortunate than De Bernis. The latter, with only his songs and madrigals, was elected to an academic arm-chair before he had attained his fortieth year. The Abbe Barthélemy waited for that honor until old age. The difference may have been owing to favor in one instance, while in the other there was only modest merit to claim the distinction.

But Louis XV. did not share Madame de Pompadour's predilection for the little rotund poetaster of an abbe. "He is a fop," said his majesty; "an ill-mannered priest." But his promotion was rapid when it did come; though he waited some years for his first step of importance. For we learn from Marmontel, who had presented his homage to the reigning favorite in the form of a complimentary ode on the occasion of the foundation of the *École Militaire*, that the marquise, being interested in his poem, gave him permission to visit her with the Abbe de Bernis. This could not have been earlier than 1751 or 1752. Duclos and the abbe, he says, were then accustomed to attend every Sunday at her toilet, and he at this time accompanied them, and was introduced by De Bernis, as the marquise had directed.

The abbe had then secured a sinecure, at Boulogne-

sur-Mer; and his ambitious hopes would have been fully attained had the pension of fifty *louis d'or* he then so earnestly sought been granted him. So says Marmontel. His own aspirations, he writes, were bounded by a desire for some post in the government that would usefully occupy him in the public service, and make him less dependent on public caprice. The public were not generally enthusiastic in their reception of Marmontel's plays. "Denis, le Tyran" was one of the most successful; but their short-lived honors were more frequently due to the actors than to the author. Marmontel, himself, was then fully persuaded that he could never achieve a high reputation in dramatic writing. Not, however, from any disparagement of his own abilities, but because he believed that all the great subjects of history; all the great interests of the human mind; violent passions, tender emotions, tragic situations; every source of terror, compassion, hatred, love, had been so thoroughly exhausted by the great masters of dramatic art who had lived and written before him, that nothing remained for the writers of his time to exercise their talents upon.

Madame de Pompadour, to whom he imparted his ideas on this subject, by no means agreed with him. She advised his continuance in a literary career as the one for which he was best suited, and recommended him to follow the example of Voltaire, who replied to the rebuffs of fortune by the production of fresh master-pieces. He received her advice as a command, and began forthwith to torture his brain for the subject of a new play. Nothing better occurred to him than the dismal one of "Les Funérailles de Sésostriis," upon which he immediately set to work. When fin-

ished, he submitted it to his patroness. Having glanced through the MS., and marked certain passages she thought susceptible of improvement, she returned it to him with a few verbal remarks in an undertone, when next he attended her toilet. The impression produced by this incident on all who were present—"marquises, dukes, countesses, princes of the blood"—was instantly manifest in the change of their manner towards the favorite's *protégé*.

Marmontel was astounded. "Friendly salutations," he says, "on all sides; sweet smiles of friendship; and before I left the room, I was invited to dinner for a fortnight at least." Poor philosopher! He made his escape as soon as possible, bowing his thanks all round, covered with confusion, as he says, and mentally ejaculating: "Ah! what must favor itself be, if the mere shadow of it falling upon me raises me immediately to such immense importance!" But this shadow of favor did not extend to "*Les Funérailles de Sésostris*," though it was sent to the Théâtre Français with a letter of recommendation, and an urgent request to produce it with every care, and as soon as possible. But the public voice could not be enlisted in its favor. After its first representation, Marmontel wrote to his patroness that the public, instead of being deeply affected, as he had hoped, at "*Les Funérailles de Sésostris*," had been moved only to laughter. "I had taken the liberty of boring the public, and the public took the liberty of hissing me."

"Poor young man!" said the king, to whom the letter was read. "The failure of his play must be as painful to him as the loss of a battle would be to me. Is there no means at hand of consoling him, no acceptable place vacant to offer?" The place of Secre-

tary of Buildings, in De Marigny's department, was ascertained to be vacant; and, at the king's request, the crestfallen dramatist was appointed to it. Thus Marmontel was consoled, and to his great satisfaction; while hoping for something still better.

By degrees De Bernis also contrived to insinuate himself into the good graces of the king. He was concerned in the so-called secret diplomacy with which the indolent and vicious Louis XV. amused himself—playing, as it were, a sort of hidden political game of chess against Madame de Pompadour and his ministers; others making the moves, the king directing; but always allowing his agents and himself to be checkmated. The Comte de Broglie was one of Louis' principal instruments in the carrying on of this inane game of diplomacy. In the course of the Seven Years' War he contrived to do France considerable harm, by the undue confidence he placed in the aimless views of the king, as well as in overrating the importance of his mission, and imparting the same view of it to his brother, the maréchal.

The Comte de Broglie was of small stature and slight figure, with that consequential air peculiar to many of the diminutive specimens of humanity. He was a choleric little personage also. The facility with which he could be put into a passion—Bezenval says—greatly amused women, who took much delight in tormenting him. By his own sex, we learn from the same authority, the little count was but slightly regarded. The Maréchal de Broglie was cast in a rougher mould. He was not of too pleasant a temper, and his manners were more suited to the camp than the *salon*; where he was accustomed to let the world know how good an opinion he had of himself.

As a general, the reputation of De Broglie was excellent. Unfortunately, however, his jealousy would not allow him to co-operate cordially with the Prince de Soubise, who held the more responsible command, and the result was disastrous to France. The marshal sought an interview with the king, for the purpose of explaining and justifying his conduct. But Louis received him in so icy a manner that the rough soldier, though he had in his time faced undauntedly a good deal of bad weather, was fairly frozen out of Versailles by the glacial chillness of its atmosphere. He had the folly to trouble his gracious majesty with a long memorial. The reply was an order to him and his coxcombed little brother to betake themselves to their estates.

It was an arbitrary proceeding on one side; and a very disagreeable one to submit to on the other. For when the château and family domain were far distant from the gay world of Paris, an order to reside there was almost like banishment to a living tomb. But it was the king's favorite way of showing his displeasure; in short, it was the fashion, and every one had to submit.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

Surrender of Port Mahon.—The Warrior's Welcome.—The Macedonian Phalanx —Richelieu's Intrigues.—Le Maréchal d'Estrées.—L'Abbé de Bernis' Suggestion.—A Sad Catastrophe.—The King's Reply to the Dauphin.—A Perplexing Position.—The Prisoner of Dourlens.—“ Nous avons Deux Généraux.”—Discontent of the People.—Royal Economy.—Le Jeu du Roi.—A Startling Event.—François Damiens.—In Distress for a Shirt.—Confessed and Absolved.—Damiens' Letter to Louis XV.—The Force of Habit.—Execution of Damiens.

EUROPE was actually at peace, though everywhere preparations were diligently making for war. Madame de Pompadour was at one of her country-seats, nursing her health ; which at times was much affected by the pestilent vapors of the stagnant waters of Versailles, and the general unhealthiness of that royal dwelling. The old libertine Duc de Richelieu, taking advantage of her temporary absence, was sighing at the feet of Madame de Lauraguais ; with the view of obtaining, through a certain influence she still had with the king, as the sister of Madame de Chateauroux, the command of the troops on the southern coast of France.

A fleet of eleven ships of the line had been hastily fitted out, and had already sailed, under the command of Admiral de La Gallissonnière, for the Mediterranean. Falling in there with the squadron commanded by the unfortunate Admiral Byng, which was carrying sup-



plies to the garrison of Fort Philip, at Minorca, the French fleet beat off the English and compelled the admiral to retreat, with some damage to his ships, to Gibraltar. At this juncture arrived the duke, to assume the command his *chère amie* had procured for him—his lucky stars always bringing him on the scene to reap where others had sown. At once the admiral embarked the maréchal and his troops, to attempt the assault of Port Mahon. The garrison being without provisions or hope of receiving any, the prospect of starvation induced the lieutenant-general in command to capitulate. Thus the strongest place in Europe, after Gibraltar, fell before the gaze, as it were, of a carpet warrior—*un homme à bonnes fortunes*.

The English shot their admiral. The French overlooked the valor of the naval commander to whom Byng had yielded, and the ladies of the court vaunted the prowess and sang the praises of the great general to whom Port Mahon had surrendered. Soon, very soon, he was on his way to the capital. What honors and substantial rewards did he fancy awaited him, as, with the triumphant air of a victor, crowned with fresh laurels and laden with the spoils of war, he ascended the grand staircase of Versailles, and unexpectedly encountered the king!

“Ah! M. de Richelieu,” said his majesty, “you are soon back again. How did you find the figs of Minorca?”

“Sire,” replied the gallant duke, somewhat crest-fallen, “I found them extremely sweet, but your majesty has changed their sweetness to bitterness.”

As Richelieu was a favorite of Louis XV., it may be inferred from this reception that he thought less highly of his brilliant achievement than did the maréchal's

numerous fair friends. They indeed exclaimed loudly against the "harshness," not to say "brutality," with which the king had welcomed back their hero from the wars. During his absence war had been proclaimed, and he had set his heart on taking the chief command of the 60,000 men destined to march on Hanover. This army was then being exercised in manœuvres founded, it was said, on those of the famous invincible Macedonian phalanx, and which had been recommended to the notice of the king by the Comte de Saint-Germain.

But the tactics of Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great were ill-received by both subaltern officers and men, on whom the worry of them fell. In vain the count strove to inspire the troops with enthusiasm for his system, by relating how fields were won with their glorious phalanx by those heroes of the B.C. period, and their destruction of the Persian hosts of Darius. It was voted a *ruse* of the count's to introduce the Prussian drill. The army would not have it. There was now no Maurice de Saxe, with his company of comedians and band of fiddlers, to lead on the troops to victory. That great soldier—"great only," as Anquetil says, "at the head of his men"—died in 1750, his constitution worn out, as much by intemperance as by the fatigues of the camp.

Madame de Pompadour, like Madame de Maintenon at the height of her power, nominated to the chief commands in the army as well as to all high offices of State. She did not, however, follow the example of her predecessor, and make military promotion dependent on the more or less frequent attendance at mass and confession. In the present instance her choice was judicious. It fell on Maréchal d'Estrées, who had

received his military training under the Comte de Saxe. Second in command were the young Duc d'Orleans and the Maréchals de Broglie and Maillebois.

The hero of Port Mahon was much disappointed. Intrigues were immediately set on foot to displace d'Estrées—through the agency of women, of course, and their *chers amis* in the army, but under the direction of Richelieu himself, still the general *cher ami* of the belles of the court and the *salons*, in spite of his sixty years, all told, and the yearly increasing redness of his nose.

Le Maréchal d'Estrées appears to have been a more cautious general than the dashing military genius under whom he had learnt the art of war. Or from difference of mental characteristics, he did not so readily seize all the bearings of his own and his opponent's position, and, calculating the chances in his favor, at once make a rush for victory. When Maréchal de Saxe failed to achieve this, he usually manœuvred to sustain his military reputation by an able retreat. And he did not leave this to chance. He had a singularly clear foresight of the probable ups and downs of fortune in the course of a campaign, and while taking steps to secure victory did not neglect to provide against ignoble defeat.

Report after report arrived indirectly from the seat of war, complaining of the dilatoriness of the commander-in-chief, and the restraint it imposed on the ardor of the troops. Insidiously this was whispered about by the women of the court who were devoted partisans of the duke; and always with the "Pray, don't mention it," so customary with the *beau sexe* when desirous of an unfavorable story being rapidly and widely circulated. Jealous officers, and especially

the Comte de Maillebois, wrote several despatches in disparagement of Maréchal d'Estrées. It would seem that the military disasters of France have, in most cases, proceeded from the jealousy of general officers. The French troops, so brave and intrepid, so brilliant and ardent in attack, have not often been led by men who could forget their own petty private interests and act in concert for the benefit and glory of their country.

It was suggested by the Abbe de Bernis that the king should take the field, to revive the ardor of the supposed dispirited troops. But Louis XV., at the age of forty-six or forty-seven, with his ever-increasing gloominess of mind, was but little inclined to undertake the harassing expedition which the gay Lothario of sixty was intriguing in all directions to be charged with. De Bernis lost favor by this suggestion. The dauphin also was desirous of being sent to the army. But it is one of the misfortunes of an heir-apparent to be doomed to idleness and uselessness. Besides, Louis XV. really disliked his heir. The Well-beloved attributed his son's wish to join the armies to an anxiety to win popularity with the troops; to supplant him, in fact, in the affections of the people.

The dauphin at this period had, indeed, need of some distraction. He was suffering from deep despondency and remorse, occasioned by a sad catastrophe of which he had inadvertently been the cause.

Returning from hunting one day with the king at Compiègne (a diversion he enjoyed so little that he was usually very absent-minded while engaged in it), he was suddenly roused from a contemplative mood by a great agitation and crashing of breaking branches among the trees on the borders of the for-

est. Fancying that one of the animals which had escaped during the hunt had taken refuge there, he instantly fired. A cry of anguish, and the exclamation, "Ah! I am killed!" thrilled the prince with horror. He alighted, and made his way through the coppice to the spot whence the sound proceeded; where, to his overwhelming grief, he found the Comte de Chambord lying on the ground, writhing in agony, and bathed in blood. He had ridden across the forest to join the dauphin on his return home; and, to avoid a long round, was pressing through the underwood, when the prince fired, the rifle-ball entering his breast.

All efforts to save him were fruitless; the attempts to extract the ball only adding to his sufferings. On the second day after the accident he died, the dauphin having remained with him to the end. He took the count's family under his protection, and, contrary to all usage and etiquette—which occasioned a great commotion in the court—became sponsor to the count's new-born child; whose premature birth had nearly proved fatal to the Countess de Chambord, on hearing of the melancholy fate of her husband. The thoughtless society of the court was accustomed, jestingly, to say that the prince might be brought to absent himself from Sunday's mass, and thus risk being put on a diet of bread and water for a twelve-month by his Jesuit confessor, if a member of the Chambord family were to make the request. The usual reply to this was, "Not to save France would he forego a mass, were the country in flames at her four corners."

To his letter requesting to be allowed to visit the armies, the king replied, "Your letter, my son, has affected me to tears. I am proud to recognize that

you inherit the sentiments of our fathers; but I cannot let you leave me yet." If the dauphin was also moved to tears by this affecting answer to his request, they must have been tears of bitterness for the bondage he was held in.

Intrigues at Versailles, treason in the camp, and the united supplications of Mesdames de Lauraguais, Flavacourt, and Luxembourg, at last prevailed with the king, in the absence of Madame de Pompadour—who was opposed to the pretensions of Richelieu—to send the duke to the army to supersede Marshal d'Estrées. He arrived while all was enthusiasm for the victory of Hastembeck, which the Comte de Maillebois, by false intelligence and intentional delays in favor of the enemy, had hoped would prove a defeat. But the able generalship of his commander-in-chief had converted his expected disgrace into a triumph, and the troops received their new commander with marked displeasure. However, d'Estrées left the army and returned to Paris, while Richelieu overran and devastated Hanover—demoralizing the soldiery by the license he permitted, and everywhere levying such heavy contributions that he was enabled, by this shameful plundering, to repair his ruined fortunes.

To have summoned a victorious general from his command to give an account of the unsatisfactory discharge of his duties placed the king in a rather perplexing and annoying position. The matter would have been passed over silently and unnoticed, but the *maréchal* demanded a hearing. Of course he was exonerated from all blame. But Richelieu and the treacherous *Maréchal de Maillebois* and his accomplices were shielded from merited disgrace and obloquy by powerful influence and considerations of

family and a great name. All proceedings against Maillebois were, therefore, suppressed. But, for form's sake, he was invited to make himself a prisoner for a few days at the Château de Dourlens, in the neighborhood of which, having left his command, he then happened to be; new employments and honors awaiting his return to the court.

It was time that this tottering old *régime* should come to the ground. Louis XV. knew that already it was doomed. But he comforted himself with the consciousness that it would last his time; that he would not be troubled to conform to any new order of things, though he exclaimed, more frequently than ever, "After us the deluge." If the people had then little opportunity of speaking their opinions, they at all events contrived to make them known in song. If to know what they thought of the respective merits of Le Maréchal d'Estrées and Le Maréchal de Richelieu could have gratified the former, he might have heard it gayly sung or shouted in all the most thronged streets and promenades of Paris, in the following lines:

LA RESSEMBLANCE ET LA DIFFÉRENCE.\*

Nous avons deux généraux,  
 Qui tous deux sont maréchaux ;  
 Voilà la ressemblance.  
 L'un de Mars est le favori,  
 Et l'autre l'est de Louis ;  
 Voilà la différence.

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\* THE RESEMBLANCE AND THE DIFFERENCE.

Two valiant generals have we,  
 And each of them a marshal he ;  
 And this resemblance have they.  
 The favorite of Mars is one,  
 As Louis' pet the other's known ;  
 Here note the difference, I pray.

Dans la guerre ils ont tous deux  
 Fait divers exploits fameux ;  
     Voilà la ressemblance.  
 A l'un Mahon s'est soumis,  
 Par l'autre il eût été pris ;  
     Voilà la différence.

Que pour eux dans les combats  
 La gloire eut toujours d'appas ;  
     Voilà la ressemblance.  
 L'un contre les ennemis,  
 L'autre contre les maris ;  
     Voilà la différence.

D'être utile à notre roi  
 Tous deux se font une loi ;  
     Voilà la ressemblance.  
 A Cythère l'un le sert,  
 Et l'autre sur le Weser ;  
     Voilà la différence.

Famous for deeds they each have done,  
 In various battles fought and won ;  
     And this resemblance have they.  
 Port Mahon did to *him* surrender,  
 When this one starved its last defender ;  
     Here note the difference, I pray.

To these two heroes, dread alarms,  
 And glory, have the sweetest charms ;  
     And this resemblance have they.  
 One bravely fights his country's foes,  
 The other's proud of husbands' woes ;  
     Here note the difference, I pray.

To be of service to the king,  
 By both is deemed the highest thing ;  
     And this resemblance have they.  
 One serves Louis in Cythera,  
 T'other on the banks of Weser ;  
     Here note the difference, I pray.



Cumberland les craint tous deux,  
 Et cherche à s'éloigner d'eux ;  
     Voilà la ressemblance.  
 De l'un il fuit la valeur,  
 Il fuit de l'autre l'odeur ;  
     Voilà la différence.

Dans un beau champ de lauriers  
 On aperçoit ces guerriers,  
     Voilà la ressemblance.  
 L'un a su les entasser,  
 L'autre veut les ramasser ;  
     Voilà la différence.

But it was not alone in songs and epigrams that the people were content to express their disapprobation of particular acts of injustice, and the administration of government generally. Widespread discontent existed; schism in the Church; discord in families. Menacing language, even when his "sacred majesty" was the subject of conversation, often met the ever-open ear of the everywhere present Lieutenant of Police. Such was the agitation of feeling among the Parisians that, with a keen remembrance of the unceremonious treatment that M. Berryer had

Each fills poor Cumberland with dread,  
 And far from each he hides his head ;  
     And this resemblance have they.  
 He fears the stalwart blows of one,  
 He longs the other's scents to shun ;  
     Here note the difference, I pray.

Both these doughty warriors see,  
 Reaching for the laurel tree ;  
     And this resemblance have they.  
 Look, one has decked his brow with leaves,  
 The other empty-handed grieves ;  
     Here note the difference, I pray.

once received at the hands of the people—when the haughty and commanding bearing of his wife had alone saved him from their violence—he scarcely ventured to divulge in high quarters, except to his patroness, Madame de Pompadour, the disturbed state of the public mind.

To avert further displeasure at the increase of the imposts—necessitated by the expenses of the war—the duchess suggested to the king the advisability of setting an example of economy to the court, by reducing the expenditure of the royal household. She hoped that the nobility, who contributed nothing to the support of the State, might at least be induced to make the burden of taxation less onerous to the tenants of their estates, by remitting something of their own exactions. She at once introduced the system on her own domains. Few, probably, followed her lead, or posterity would have heard more of the self-sacrificing *grandees*. The king, at her request, consented to put down several hunting equipages, at least during the campaign; and to utilize for that purpose a portion of the numerous stud kept up at each of the royal hunting-establishments.

The frequent journeys he was accustomed to make to Compiègne, which he was rebuilding, to Fontainebleau, Choisy, and other places, in order to dispel his *ennui* by change of scene and residence, were, while the war lasted, to occur at longer intervals, and with less parade and diminished retinue. There were to be no theatricals at Versailles, and the works then in progress at the Louvre were to be indefinitely suspended.

If these plans had been rigidly carried out, it is probable that the treasury would not have been more

appreciably benefited than when, to supply the needs of the vainglorious despot, Louis XIV., gold and silver, priceless in the form of works of art, and belonging not to him, but to his subjects, were sent to the mint, and there converted into an insignificant sum in *louis d'or*, *livres*, and *écus*. But it suited neither the convenience nor the pleasure of Louis XV. to be restricted by the economical arrangements he had, in a moment of *ennui*, consented to.

When there was no theatrical performance at Versailles there was the *jeu du roi*, at which he lost or won a thousand or more *louis d'or* in an evening. If he won, he put his winnings into his own private purse or hoard, for he did not readily take from it; if he lost, he reimbursed himself by an order on the treasury—a draft in the king's own hand, to be paid at sight and no questions asked.

But at this stirring period Louis XV., sunk in slothful apathy, troubled himself scarcely at all either about the progress of the war or the domestic condition of his kingdom. He may have derived some sort of languid amusement from the embarrassment his private diplomacy occasioned to secret agents and recognized ministers: diplomacy which would have made both them and himself utterly ridiculous in the eyes of the European powers, had not the system of espionage, bribery of couriers, and tampering with letters, public and private, been as diligently and systematically practised by other governments as by his own, and the king's secret by these means been betrayed to every foreign court.

A startling event, however, occurred at this time. On the 4th of January, 1757, as the king was stepping into his carriage to return to Trianon, having been to

Versailles to see Madame Victoire, his third daughter, who was suffering from a slight indisposition, a man suddenly pressed forward and stabbed him in the side. It was six o'clock in the evening; dark, except from the flickering, fitful light of torches. This may have been the reason that a shabbily dressed man, wrapped up in an old brown coat, and with his hat drawn over his eyes, was able, unperceived, to approach so near the entrance of the Salle des Gardes, where the royal carriage and the numerous attendants were waiting. So rapidly was the deed done that it was unnoticed by the dauphin and the Duc d'Ayen, who, with the gentlemen of his suite and officers of the guard following, were attending the king to his carriage. He himself was not aware that he was wounded, but exclaimed, "Some one struck me violently with his elbow."

The assassin, François Damiens, might, it would seem, have escaped, had he wished to elude detection. But motionless, and with an unconcerned air, he stood amongst the royal lackeys—the dauphin being the first to observe him. Highly indignant that "a stranger of that description" should presume to approach the king, he called to him, in an angry tone, "Don't you see the king?" At the same moment the man's hat was knocked from his head by the bayonet of one of the body-guards, and the principal equerry seized him by the collar of his coat and shook him violently. Not the slightest resistance did he make to this treatment, and not a word did he utter.

It was then only that the king, having placed his hand on his side, discovered blood upon it. "I am wounded," he said; "this man has stabbed me! Arrest him, but don't kill him." The wound was a

slight one, probably owing to the many wraps in which the king was muffled up, on account of the severity of the weather. He was able without assistance to walk up the grand staircase. But what seems remarkable—as he resided habitually at Versailles—a French account of this event, by a contemporary, states “there was no change of linen to be had for the king, or a *valet de chambre* to attend him, as he was then staying for a few days at Trianon.” His majesty’s stock of underclothing, one must therefore infer, was but a small one, and rigid etiquette of course forbade the use of the dauphin’s shirts, even in a case of such emergency.

However, Louis, who began to feel rather faint, was at last undressed. Priests and physicians soon after arrived. The latter immediately bled him, though he had already lost much blood. Always greatly alarmed at the idea of death, he unceasingly demanded his Jesuit confessor and the holy oils. The commotion in the palace reached the apartment of the queen, who, being informed that the king was taken ill, hastened to him. “Madame, I have been assassinated!” he replied several times to her anxious inquiries. The penknife wound in his side had been dressed, and he had been placed in a bed “without sheets” (surely the queen might have lent him a pair), and Doctor Lamartinière had pronounced that the wound was not deep, and his majesty’s precious life in no danger.

But neither king, queen, nor dauphin could be pacified until, in the course of the night, the Abbé de Solini had surrendered the king into the hands of Father Desmarets, his usual confessor. The ceremony of confession, absolution, and the holy oils lasted

several hours; after which Louis XV., with a clear conscience, went comfortably to sleep—an ecclesiastic seated on either side of the bed, and inside the curtains; the dauphin keeping watch at the foot.

The next day, "universal horror!"—the news had spread like wildfire. "The king had been stabbed in the heart, and report proclaimed that he was at the point of death." All the bells in Paris tolled a funeral knell (very disturbing they were to Marmontel; who, in the garret his friend Clairon allowed him to use as a study, was writing a tragedy; and these doleful bells reminded him unpleasantly of "*Les Funérailles de Sésostris*"); prayers were commanded to be said in all the churches far and near for the space of forty hours. The rebellious lawyers of the parliament repented of their opposition to the decrees of *Le bien aimé*, and prayed their president to hasten to Versailles, to lay at the feet of their sovereign their homage and duty, and expressions of heart-felt sympathy.

Damiens, over whom it had been thought necessary to place a guard of sixty soldiers, wrote to the king:

"Sire, I am sorry that I was so unfortunate as to gain access to you; but if you do not take your people's part, before many years you, and the dauphin, and many others will perish."

This letter added to the fears of the king, and served well the purposes of both Jesuit priests and the intriguers of both sexes at court. A repetition of the scene at Metz, with Pompadour for Chateauroux, was fully expected. Comte d'Argenson had the folly prematurely to rejoice in his long-looked-for triumph. But though Louis would give no positive order for Madame de Pompadour's retirement from the court, he allowed it to be intimated to her that she would do

well to retire and avoid the mortification of being dismissed. For as the soreness of his healing wound more or less troubled him, so did he balance between resisting or yielding to the advice of those about him. The minister who undertook to intimate to her this disgrace was the man who owed his position to her favor and influence, M. Machault. And he appears to have executed his commission so offensively that it was replied to much in the same strain as the Père de Sacy's letter. "Madame de Pompadour received no orders from those who were accustomed to obey her." "A lackey," she said, "would be turned out of the house with more consideration."

M. Machault was himself destined to be turned out of the house. The king had kept his bed fifteen days, with little occasion to keep it more than fifteen hours. Beginning to be tired of this, he arose and, from force of habit, went, for distraction, to the apartments of Madame de Pompadour. Before he left, there were on their way to the ministers, Machault and d'Argenson, two private notes, which ran thus:

"I no longer require your services; I command you to send me your resignation as secretary of state, of war, etc., etc.

"You will retire to your estates.

(Signed)

"LOUIS."

The wretched Damiens, after near three months' imprisonment, was executed with barbarities that make the blood run cold to read of them; the worthless, contemptible Louis XV. having neither the magnanimity to pardon the man nor the clemency to order any mitigation of the horrid tortures inflicted upon him, which an executioner, in full court dress, stood

by to witness, and to ensure their being unsparingly heaped on the unfortunate creature.

The city of Amiens presented a petition, at the instance of M. Gresset, the author of "Vert Vert," to be allowed to change its name to Louisville; but the Bishop of Amiens had the good sense to interfere, and the good people of Amiens were not gratified in their wish to perpetuate the remembrance of their fulsome folly.



## CHAPTER XL.

Voltaire, en Grand Seigneur.—Voltaire at Ferney.—Pretty Madame du Bocage.—A Pilgrimage to Ferney.—Death of “Cher Fontenelle.”—Walpole and Madame du Deffant.—“L’Orphélin de la Chine.”—“L’Orphélin” and the Jesuits.—War à Outrance.—“De l’Esprit” of Helvetius.—Jesuits and Jansenists.—A Grand Auto-da-Fé.—Philosophism and Loyalty.—A Sojourn in the Bastille.—“He is a Strange Man.”—Philosopher and Critic.

It was hinted to Louis XV. that Voltaire would like to return to Paris. He replied curtly, “Let him stay where he is.” The poet was then at the Château de Prangin, in the Canton de Vaud, elaborating, at the suggestion of his friend d’Argental, his play of “L’Orphélin de la Chine,” from three acts, in which it was first written, to five. Voltaire had discovered, from unpleasant experience, that the favors of the royal philosopher of Potsdam were more than counterbalanced by the mortifications that invariably followed them. The honors and dignities with which he had been invested he had been glad to resign, and with his niece and his secretary, after some skirmishes in doggerel verse, he had made an ignominious retreat from the Prussian territory—eventually taking up his quarters in Switzerland.

Through fortunate commercial and monetary speculations, the competency he had inherited from his father had grown into an ample fortune. His writ-

ings had brought him fame rather than added to his income, and he was able to live *en grand seigneur*, first at "Les Delices," an estate distant a league from Geneva, and afterwards at Ferney, which was on French territory, without being at all dependent on the success of his literary labors. He would have been glad to have the title of count, which he sometimes assumed, confirmed to him—deriving it from the château and small domain of Tournay, situated between Ferney and Geneva, and bought from the president of the parliament of Dijon.

The disfavor of the court, which had become a very hostile feeling, would have passed away probably during his absence, but for the surreptitious publication at Geneva, from a falsified manuscript, of a work never intended, as sometimes asserted, to appear in print. Madame de Pompadour, who appears to have been greatly maligned in this work, had sent him but recently, as a mark of her esteem and friendship, her portrait, painted by her own hand. On reading the passages in the work referred to, Voltaire felt that a friend at court was lost to him. "I am lost!" he exclaimed, as he fretted and fumed, and stamped and raged; for, with all his philosophy, he bore with but little equanimity the minor ills of life.

But though absent from the gay and busy capital, Voltaire kept up an active correspondence with great men, M.M. the philosophers. Marmontel and Chabanon were especially his *protégés* and disciples, and to them and his pupil, La Harpe (who as a boy of ten, when left destitute, had sought the protection of Voltaire, on whom he was now dependent at Ferney), he looked to carry on his work, perpetuate his doctrines, keep alive his fame, and defend his memory.

To D'Alembert and Diderot he forwarded his contributions to the Encyclopædia; to the Théâtre Français, his new plays—Lekain, for whom the principal rôles were then written, going over to Ferney, where Voltaire had built a handsome theatre, to receive his instructions and suggestions, and to rehearse his part with him. Numerous short, satirical works, which a modern French writer has called "feuilletons of the highest order," were produced at this time, at short intervals.

Several of the earlier members of the philosophic brotherhood had died within the last few years—Hénault, the historian and *bon vivant*; the President, Montesquieu; the aged Fontenelle, almost to the last to be met with in the *salons*; for he went the round of them, giving an evening to each in its turn, and in all of them the centenarian philosopher was received with open arms. In his latter years he took especial interest in Madame du Bocage, and usually spent an hour or two in the afternoon with her. She was in vogue just then as a poetess, and used to read her pretty little namby-pamby sonnets to the aged *savant*. If, being exceedingly deaf, he heard not a word of them, he knew that his loss was not great; he could still nod and smile his approval, and pat the little vain girlish widow of forty-two softly on the cheek; very softly, not to damage its delicate pink rouge bloom.

Madame du Bocage had written a tragedy, "Les Amazons." It never attained to the honor of a representation, but it found favor with d'Alembert and Diderot, "the dispensers of fame." It is said to have contained some rather bold figures of speech, advanced opinions such as may have been looked for from amazons, or a female philosopher. Henceforth

Madame du Bocage was saluted as the tenth muse. Her fame spread, and she actually carried off the Rouen Academy's prize for poetry. "Arrayed as a muse," we are told, like a carnival goddess, pretty Madame du Bocage set out on the fashionable pilgrimage to the Temple of Ferney, to do homage to "*le dieu Voltaire*." An ovation awaited her. As soon as she was seated, down on his knees went the gallant philosopher (he now used a cushion for that purpose, his knees beginning to feel the effects of continual sudden contact with the floor). Holding up before her a laurel wreath, "Madame," he said, "your *coiffure* lacks but one ornament; permit me to offer the only one worthy of you." The goddess bowed her head, and the god laid his offering on her fair brow.

She extended her travels as far as Italy, and her fame preceded her. Sonnets innumerable were laid at her feet, and she was compared to all the stars in the firmament of heaven. Flattering letters from Voltaire followed her. The little woman's head was completely turned. When she got back to Paris, she was shocked by the news that "that dear Fontenelle" was dead. "Really! what a pity, poor dear Fontenelle!" He wanted a month and two days of completing his hundred years; and he might have eked out even a longer term, but the war disturbed him, because, as he said, it put an end to pleasant conversation. He disliked to see people around him in a state of excitement, carried away by feeling, and apparently in heated discussion. It disturbed the serene atmosphere of his own tranquil mind. In spite, therefore, of the anxious care of his lady-friends, Fontenelle succumbed to this distracting state of things, and died.

Whether deserved or not, he had the reputation of

being simply an egoist—never (so said his oldest friends and admirers) having experienced, in the whole of his long life, a single emotion either of friendship or love. “It is not a heart you have there,” said Madame du Deffant to Fontenelle, pointing to his left side, “but a second brain.” She, however, had but little reason to reprove his egoism, her own affections being no less self-centred, except in the tenderness she sometimes displayed towards an old black cat; and, in her old age, a sort of senile fondness for Walpole. Self-interest still was the predominating feeling, even in her tender correspondence with him; as she sold his carefully preserved letters for three hundred pounds. Fontenelle did not write letters. He found himself sufficiently interesting to be well taken care of by the ladies, without the trouble of taking up his pen in their service. Now and then, those who made him most comfortable he rewarded with a neatly turned compliment, slyly whispered in the ear. Only Madame Geoffrin, as we have said, made demands on his purse; and, at her bidding, he opened it for charitable purposes to the extent she requested.

It was the same with his philosophism; he gave his sanction freely to the new doctrines. He had been accused of atheism; but in his green old age he contributed towards the “regeneration of humanity” nothing more than a little occasional good-humored ridicule and raillery—and that less for the edification of his brethren, the philosophers, than for the amusement of the ladies who gathered around him, and who would say at such times, as laughingly they patted his hands, “Ah! the dear Fontenelle, he is malicious to-night.” When, at last, his accustomed arm-chair in the snug corner reserved for him was occupied no

more, his loss was lamented for the space of a whole evening, and his praises were warmly sung by the beauties of all the *salons* of Paris. In literature and science he held a very high place. Voltaire says, "He may be regarded as the most comprehensive genius that the age of Louis XIV. has produced." He might have added the age of Louis XV. also.

Voltaire's play, before mentioned, of "L'Orphélin de la Chine," had been produced in 1755, at the Théâtre Français. It was the first play in which all the actors wore the proper costume of the characters represented. Though Lekain and Mdlle. Clairon had begun and continued this reform, there were actors and actresses who, because of the expense of a new and greatly varied wardrobe, could only follow their example by slow degrees. Besides, some actresses were fond of displaying whatever diamonds and other jewels they possessed, no matter what character they were playing. Some actors, too, liked to fancy themselves for a brief space veritable *talons rouges* (Adam was once represented, wearing that distinguished *chaussure* of the nobility, and with silk stockings, diamond knee buckles, lace cravat, ruffles, sword, etc.). "L'Orphélin" was successful, despite Fréron's malignant criticism; uniformity and propriety of costume being no doubt in its favor.

Two years after, the king having become timid, suspicious, and more desponding since the attack on him by Damiens, and Madame de Pompadour's task more arduous than before, it was proposed that the actors of the Théâtre Français should, for his amusement, play at Versailles "L'Orphélin de la Chine." The dauphin and the Jesuits were opposed to it, and, as usual, poor Marie Leczinska was put forward as a

suppliant, praying that the king would not set his subjects so bad an example as to sanction a play so profane. There were passages in it, she said, unfavorable to religion and to his own royal authority. Louis consoled her with the assurance that he would then and ever protect the religion of the State; and M. de Saint-Florentin waited upon her with a copy of the play, authorized to strike out all that the queen objected to. She acknowledged that she had not read a line of it, but implored him to suppress the equivocal passages which she understood it contained. Her Polish confessor—for she would always confess in the Polish language—not having been present at this interview, the queen, by his orders, was the next morning again on her knees before the king. Again he raised his suppliant wife and embraced her with apparent affection, and she went her way consoled. But on the following evening “L’Orphélin de la Chine” was performed, and met with great approval. Some omissions had probably been made; while the costumes giving greater vividness to the scene, this novelty in some degree prevented a too strict attention being paid, by otherwise watchful ears, to the sarcasm slightly lurking in the utterances of some of the characters.

But if Voltaire’s play escaped suppression, an opportunity soon offered of attacking the prevailing philosophism under another form. The dauphin, forbidden the display of his military prowess in combating the philosophic king of Prussia, resolved to wage war à *oufrance* against the sect whose doctrines had not only invaded the *salons*, but were rapidly infesting all classes of society.

The elder Helvetius had been dead some two or

three years when, in 1758, his son presented copies of his work, "De l'Esprit," to the king, queen, and dauphin, to Madame de Pompadour and other persons of the court. It had been printed at the Louvre, "with the approval and permission of the king." M. Tercier was then censor. He had not troubled himself to examine the work, but took for granted that it was a mere harmless *jeu d'esprit*. The presentation copies were very graciously received by the royal family; but to the dauphin alone, probably, it occurred to read the book.

Oh, horror! he turned to the title-page. Could he believe his eyes! "By approbation and permission of the king"! "I'm going to show the queen what fine things her steward publishes," he exclaimed to the astonished dauphine, as, book in hand, he rushed out of the room and made for the queen's apartments. Great was her majesty's alarm; and while the dauphin hastened to the king to denounce Helvetius and his book, she sent for her confessor. Absolution was needed for her thoughtless acceptance of so impious an offering. The king, too, shuddered. "Let the privilege be instantly revoked," he cried—" *Je le veux*, and Tercier be put under arrest." The King's Council forthwith assembled, and a decree was issued declaring it punishable with death to publish any book or pamphlet containing an attack on religion. At the same time the Encyclopædia was denounced in the Parliament, and the privilege granted to d'Alembert by M. d'Argenson withdrawn.

The Jesuits intrigued with great energy at this moment, hoping to maintain their footing in France. The Jansenists were as vigorously doing their best to oppose them, even to giving their support to the



Encyclopædists. "De l'Esprit"—in which, as already observed, Diderot is supposed to have greatly aided Helvetius—was, like its reputed author, refined in tone, elevated in sentiment; while the acknowledged writings of Diderot were violent, coarse, and repulsive. Yet he is said to have concealed under an unattractive exterior a fine nature and generous feelings. "De l'Esprit," suggested by "L'Esprit des Lois," was an exposition of the peculiar character of the epicurean philosophy, as understood by Helvetius—a system of virtue and happiness practicable only by the rich, unless, indeed, every man were as large-hearted as Helvetius himself.

The Jesuits would have burnt this kindly natured philosopher, could they have had their way. Others, more merciful, would only have hanged him. But taking into consideration that to adopt measures too harsh towards the offending philosophers would revive the lately quelled dissensions of the Parliament and the Church, and their resistance to the king's decrees (for after Louis XV. was attacked by Damians all parties had agreed to forgive and forget the past) it was determined to order only an *auto-da-fé* of the books, to serve as effigies of their authors. The two published volumes, A—B, of the Encyclopædia, "De l'Esprit," and half a dozen anonymous pamphlets were, by the hand of the public executioner, then consigned to the flames. Two or three obscure individuals also, who had too openly expressed their feelings, were lodged for awhile in the Bastille. Helvetius—of whom Voltaire says "he was a true philosopher, who has been persecuted on account of a book and his virtue"—immediately, on hearing of the commotion raised by the intrusion of *esprit* into the royal house-

hold, resigned his post of queen's steward, and left Paris to enjoy, undisturbed for a time, the pleasures of life at his château of Voré. Tercier, liberated from arrest, gave up the office of censor. He was dismissed from the appointment he also held in the Bureau of Foreign Affairs. But singularly enough, the king took him into his confidence and gave him the direction of the secret correspondence.

"De l'Esprit," which pictured happiness under an aspect so different from that of the savagism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was near being attacked by "*l'homme de la nature*," but the government prosecution induced him to refrain. Christophe de Beaumont and other prelates launched their thunderbolts against it from every pulpit of Paris and Versailles and place of importance in the land. The Pope, Clement XIII., said of it, "That it combined every kind of poison which could be found in modern books." "De l'Esprit," in consequence, became so widely known, and so anxiously sought after, that it was speedily translated into every European language. Edition after edition of the work was smuggled into France from Amsterdam and Geneva, and was immediately bought up—so largely and eagerly was it in demand.

Hoping to put a stop to this, and at the same time to extirpate philosophism, the dauphin, at the King's Council, proposed that sentence of exile should be pronounced against the Encyclopædists. The king hesitated to take so decided a step, and withheld his consent until, as he said, he should have reflected upon it. In the meanwhile he consulted with Madame de Pompadour. Her advice, supported by the opinion of the Duc de Choiseul—just returned from Vienna, and about to take the direction of foreign affairs—led

him to decline to accede to the dauphin's proposal, conceiving it, as he informed him, fraught with danger to the peace of the kingdom. But the king was more intent on checking the authoritative tone assumed by the prince in the council-chamber than concerned with the acts of the philosophers.

Louis XV. could never divest himself of the idea that every act of the dauphin was inspired by a yearning for popularity; which he regarded as seeking to supplant him in the affections of his people. That some feeling of attachment to the once "Well-beloved" of the nation still lingered in the hearts of the people had recently been evident, in the general horror and consternation expressed by them when the life of their sovereign was supposed to be in danger from the attack of an assassin. Philosophism, therefore, had not yet extirpated loyalty and a veneration for the throne; though he who sat upon it was so unworthy a representative of kingly power.

But to attempt at this crisis rigorously to extirpate philosophism might, possibly, have served only to hasten on those heavy disasters which Louis XV. was far-seeing enough to discern that his own vices, added to those of his predecessor, were surely preparing for the future of France. Instead, therefore, of "After us the deluge," as he was constantly exclaiming, the national calamities, in whatever form they might come, might haply, as he saw, fall on his own head.

Let, then, the dauphin amuse himself by denouncing their books, and let a bonfire be made of them in the Place de Grève; but as for the philosophers themselves, notwithstanding the decreed penalty of death, not a hair of their heads shall be singed. If one of their number should perchance be requested to sojourn

for a week or ten days in the Bastille, let him have comfortable quarters; a sumptuous table provided, and a *cordons bleu* for his *chef*. No fasting on Fridays, except the *soupe maigre* that his servant will eat for him. Let him have writing materials, flowers, and music, and all the forbidden philosophical books. In a word, let nothing be wanting to make his visit pleasant. Such was the liberal treatment Marmontel received when, for "Belisarius" and "Les Incas de Peru," he was provided with quarters for ten days in the renowned royal fortress. He had really a pleasant time of it; and pursued his literary occupations undisturbed by the street cries that so wofully annoyed him in his attic study in Mdlle. Clairon's house.

Probably but for distinguished patronage less solicitude might have been shown for Marmontel's comfort and convenience. "He's a strange man, that Marmontel," said Madame de Pompadour, after an interview he had requested of her, through Doctor Quesnay, at the time of the agitation concerning the denunciation of the Encyclopædia and "De l'Esprit." He entered with an alarmingly tragic air. She fancied some terrible disaster had befallen him. "Madame," he said, "that which distresses me is the present state of the kingdom, occasioned by these quarrels between the clergy and the Parliament. I ask you to reflect, Madame, that the eyes of the country are upon you. Since the dismissal of M. d'Argenson from his office, it is known that all power is in your hands. If the vessel of the State be well guided, the blessing of the people will rest on you; if it should be wrecked, it is you they will accuse as the cause of their calamity."

Madame de Pompadour was disposed to smile at this lecture. But Marmontel preserved the same seri-

ous air. "Madame," he continued very gravely, "we depend upon you." He then made his bow and retired. "What a strange man!" she exclaimed. It is possible, however, that her advice to the king was influenced by this appeal. The philosophers had in her a sympathetic friend, and the Duc de Choiseul, who, under her influence, was about to take the helm of the State, was himself both philosopher and critic, and absolutely under the domination of the Encyclopædists.

## CHAPTER XLI.

The Battle of Rosbach.—A Warrior-Priest.—Soubisé at Lutzelbach.—L'Aimable Vainqueur.—Close of the Third Campaign.—“Liberty, Equality.”—Le Duc de Choiseul.—Braving the Dauphin.—La Divine Sophie Arnould.—Disappearance of Sophie.—Manners and Morals.—The Muse Terpsichore.—The Muse at Longchamps.—An Opulent Danseuse.—A Real Sister of Mercy.

THE menacing attitude assumed by the dauphin towards the modern philosophy and its professors served rather to propagate the new doctrines, and to gain them adherents, than to check their dissemination among the people. The French, as De Tocqueville says, “do not easily accommodate themselves to liberty.” And it has been sufficiently proved that heavy-handed despotism is a yoke that galls them but little when it is associated with what is called glory, however vain-glorious that may actually be. The news of a victory over Frederick of Prussia would at this particular crisis have raised the careworn, dispirited people from the depths of despondency to the glowing heights of the seventh heaven. There would have been *fêtes*, and fireworks, and songs of triumph from one end of France to the other.

But, sad reverse of this picture, the battle of Rosbach has been fought. And although the gallant commander-in-chief, “the handsome courtier,” the Prince de Soubise, has managed to save his *batteries*

*de cuisine*, and the vigilance and activity of the Staff Officer of his *chef*, Marin, have also preserved his camp service of plate from the grasp of the bearish Frederick, who would have sent it to the mint; yet Rosbach is a disastrous defeat for the French. It utterly neutralizes the first success of their arms in Westphalia; and Soubise, "such a good comrade, so full of spirit, so gay always, and even so brave," must resign his command. This is grief inexpressible to Madame de Pompadour, whose firm friend the prince has been from her first appearance at court, and from whose valor, epicurean though he was, she had looked for great achievements.

A prince of the house of Condé, M. de Clermont, Abbé de St. Germain-aux-Prés, was despatched to the armies, at the private recommendation of Cardinal de Bernis to the king, to revive the tarnished lustre of the French arms. But the mantle of the great Condé had not descended on M. de Clermont. There have been warrior-priests who have led troops to victory; but the Abbé de St. Germain-aux-Prés was not a priest of that calibre. He had won his spurs on no well-fought field; he inspired no enthusiasm among the soldiery, and the generals in command under him criticised very freely the orders he issued. Perhaps they were negligent in executing them; for twice, as the declared results of disobedience, portions of the army fell into an ambuscade.

When, however, for the third time the priestly commander-in-chief collected his forces, and led them to Crevelt, an elevated spot near Düsseldorf, his arrangements for receiving the enemy's attack were made with such evident want of tactical skill that a speedy defeat, with a loss of seven thousand men, and

a *sauf qui peut* for the survivors, brought disgrace on him and the military reputation of France. This great soldier-priest did not wait for his dismissal. He attributed the disaster to want of discipline and disobedience of his orders, and requested his recall. Singularly, however, it was the Prince de Soubise, who, remaining with his army until the end of the campaign—the season being very far advanced—redeemed, so far as the gallantry of the French soldier was concerned, the dishonor his successor had heaped on it by taking the lead in an ignominious flight.

Seizing, shortly after M. de Clermont's defeat, an opportunity which offered of attacking the Hessians and Hanoverians, he compelled them to vacate Hanover, and replaced the French in the position from which they had been driven. Ten days after, at Lutzelberg, the prince effaced the stain which Rosbach had cast on his own reputation as a general, and won there also his marshal's baton. Thus ended the third year's campaign of this calamitous war.

But, however serious the reverses of France, all is well with the Parisians if the misfortunes of the country do but afford them a theme for a witty jest or a song. When the Prince de Soubise returned to Paris, a numerous company of the wild young rakes of the capital danced for a whole night under the windows of his hôtel, to a tune, just then the rage, called "*La danse de l'aimable vainqueur.*" Occasionally, to allow the dancers a short respite from their fatigues, the prince was serenaded, to the same tune, with the following epigram, in allusion to the *ruse* by which his army fell into the hands of the Prussian king at Rosbach. All Paris (then meaning all France) was joyously singing or shouting—



"Soubise dit, la lanterne à la main ;  
 J'ai beau chercher, où diable est mon armée ?  
 Elle était là pourtant hier matin ;  
 Me l'a-t-on prise, ou l'aurais-je égarée ?  
 Ah ! je perds tout ; je suis un étourdi ;  
 Mais attendons au grand jour, à midi.  
 Que vois-je, ô ciel ! que mon âme est ravie !  
 Prodige heureux ! la voilà, la voilà !  
 Ah ! ventrebleu, qu'est ce donc que cela ?  
 Je me trompais, c'est l'armée ennemie." \*

Le Chevalier de Mirabeau, uncle of the orator, was the reputed author of this popular epigram.

The soldier-abbe of the princely house of Condé, also, escaped not the jests and gibes of the populace. On the quays and in all the most frequented parts of Paris various songs, recording his deeds of arms, were sung to the accompaniment of a violin, and thousands of copies were sold among the people. Generally they were contemptuous in tone—for instance, the following:

" Moitié casque, moitié rabat,  
 Aussi propre à l'un comme à l'autre,  
 Clermont pêche comme un soldat.  
 Et se bat comme un apôtre.

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\* " With lantern held on high, brave Soubise stood,  
 And said, The Deuce ! Where are my Corps d'Armée ?  
 I search in vain ! Yet there, by all that's good !  
 I know they camped at noon, but yesterday.  
 Has it been captured ? Have I from it strayed ?  
 'Tis just my stupid luck to lose my all !  
 Come, daylight ! Come, high noon ! But see, now praised  
 Be Heaven ! My troops ! The sight delights my soul !  
 Yet what ! Good God ! my drowsy brain is crazed !  
 The foe I see ! I hear their trumpets' call !"

"Est-ce un Abbé? L'Eglise le renie.  
 Un général? Mars l'a bien maltraité.  
 Mais il lui reste au moins l'Académie:  
 N'y fut-il pas muet par dignité?  
 Qu'est-il enfin? Que son mérite est mince!  
 Hélas! j'ai beau lui chercher un talent;  
 Un titre auguste éclaire son néant,  
 Pour son malheur le pauvre homme est un prince.  
 Moitié casque, etc." \*

It was at the close of this third campaign that Cardinal de Bernis suggested the advisability of making proposals of peace. Madame de Pompadour indignantly rejected the very idea of peace under such circumstances: her promise had been given to her "dear cousin" of Austria to support her cause, and her honor was concerned in supporting it to the utmost resources of France. So the war went on. Another army was raised in the spring; fresh supplies were called for, and the Farmers-general, in order to furnish them, pressed more heavily on the people. With depopulated villages and the provinces sinking under the burden of taxation, no wonder that murmurings arose. "Liberty, Equality!" as

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\* "Half in helmet, half in mitre,  
 Just as good for one as t'other,  
 Clermont preaches like a fighter,  
 And fights like a Franciscan brother.

Is he a priest? The Church disowns him.  
 A soldier? Mars denies his claim.  
 In the Academy do we find him?  
 There he sits mute, unknown to fame.  
 In vain I seek for talent; in vain on all my lantern shines;  
 In religion, law, or letters, of his fame we hear no hints:  
 A title, meant to glorify, his nothingness illumines,  
 Alas for his misfortune! the poor man is a prince "

first advanced by Montesquieu, were, though in a different sense, pleasant sounds in the ears of the oppressed. They interpreted them as being placed on an equality with the great nobles in their exemption from forced taxation; with liberty, of course, to contribute what they would towards the needs of the State. This, in the case of the great nobles, was usually nothing at all.

But while the provinces were doomed to much sorrow and suffering, Paris was gay; little affected, apparently, by the disasters of the war. Philosophism thrived, and the "great work of the eighteenth century," as the projectors and contributors were pleased to call their Encyclopædia, still went on. The determination expressed by the dauphin to continue his raid on that and similar publications, "until the accursed thing should be rooted out of the land," furnished the free-thinkers with a theme for many a witty couplet; and many a witty jest that amused the charming little idol of the *salons*, the philosophical Duchesse de Choiseul.

The Duc de Choiseul was not only Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of War, but, under Madame de Pompadour, he ruled the State; every department of government being directed by persons wholly devoted to him. Though his appearance was commonplace, and his countenance plain to ugliness, he had an irresistible charm of manner, and the art of fascination, to an extent possessed but by few. One of the most brilliant men in society, he was yet little to be relied upon; but he was devoted to Marie Thérèse and to Madame de Pompadour, and was far more influenced by the latter than she was by him. In this respect, however, he but followed the fashion

of the time; the extraordinary deference which men then paid to women, without holding them in very high esteem, and in some instances utterly contemning them, is very remarkable.

The duke's courtly manners, the fluency and eloquence with which he expressed himself, and the talent or tact that enabled him readily to impress the mind of another with the sentiments which seemed to animate his own, made him a most acceptable minister to Louis XV. And none the less acceptable was he for having braved the dauphin and reproached him for his subservience to the Jesuits, who in M. de Choiseul had an uncompromising enemy. The dauphin, in a memorial presented to Louis XV., represented him as intriguing against them. "Ah! fie! Monsieur!" the duke had replied to the prince's energetic defence of the Society of Jesus, "can a dauphin be so ardent in the cause of the monks?" And again, "Perhaps, Monsieur," he said, "I may some day be so unfortunate as to be your subject, but assuredly I shall never be at your service." The dauphin complained to the king. He replied that M. de Choiseul had reason to feel wounded by the charge he had brought against him. Such expressions, prompted by his just indignation, must therefore be overlooked.

But society, philosophical and otherwise, was far less interested at this time in the political situation of France, the ill-success of the war, and the distress of the provinces, than in the *début* of a new goddess of the opera—the youthful divinity, Mdlle. Sophie Arnould, whose various perfections created a sensation amounting to a *fureur*. Her voice was declared enchanting, and her method pronounced perfect by the critics, amongst whom was the aged Rameau.

Her beauty captivated all men; turned the heads of both nobles and philosophers; broke the hearts and emptied the purses of a few rich Farmers-general and wealthy adorers among *la haute bourgeoisie*.

Her parents are said to have objected to her appearing as a public singer. But as they were people of no higher grade than that of keepers of a lodging-house, or hotel, in the Rue des Fossés St. Germain, it is far more likely that, discovering their daughter had a fine voice, their object was to train her for the operatic stage. Otherwise the instruction, expensive probably, of professors of such high pretensions as Mdles. Clairon and Fell—the former giving her lessons in declamation, the latter in singing—would scarcely have been thought necessary for her.

Marmontel, from his intimacy with Mdlle. Clairon, had had the opportunity of seeing and hearing her promising pupil. At one of his toilet visits to Madame de Pompadour, herself so talented a musician—he spoke of this youthful prodigy. He praised her beauty, her liveliness, her wit, her surprising vocal charm and ability, with a warmth he was, perhaps, scarcely aware of; for he, like the rest of humanity's regenerators, was also under the spell. His patroness smiled at his enthusiasm, and expressed a wish to hear the young lady sing. The following day, Madame de Pompadour being at the Hôtel d'Évreux, Mdlle. Sophie was introduced to the *quasi* queen of France, and sang the music she put before her so much to her satisfaction that she recommended her to make her *début* without further delay.

Sophie Arnould was but seventeen when she made her first public appearance; but in no very prominent part. Between that and her second *début* an interval

of some weeks occurred ; during which " What had become of 'the beautiful Sophie'?" was a question anxiously discussed by the fashionable world in every *salon*. There were ladies who hoped that she would never return—ladies whose fickle *amis intimes* had forsaken them, to lay bouquets and *billets-doux* and their own elegant selves at the feet of this new star of the opera. But all in good time the beautiful Sophie came back, and her *début* in a new opera, by Dauvergne, was announced. She was greeted with a storm of applause. All Paris flocked to hear the truant prima donna ; whose fame was increased far beyond what the finest singing ever heard would have obtained for her, when it was known that her absence was owing to her elopement with the Comte de Lauraguais.

For a wager he had engaged a room at the hotel, and, introducing himself as having just arrived from the country with a tragedy in his valise that he hoped to get received at the Théâtre Français, took the opportunity of wooing the youthful songstress. Before a fortnight had elapsed, they fled together. At a *petit-souper*, given to his friends who were in the secret, he announced his success, and that his wager was won. La Comtesse de Lauraguais, the lady at whose feet the Duc de Richelieu had sighed, and had obtained through her intercession with the king his late employments in the army, was the wife of this gallant count, now the *ami intime* of Mdlle. Sophie Arnould. Such were the manners and morals of the age of Louis XV.!

The career of Sophie Arnould was one of dissipation and reckless extravagance. She lost very early the beauty of her voice—it became even disagreeable; but

having amassed wealth, she was still able to live in some style, and give balls and *fêtes*. Like many other actresses of her day, she was reduced to great straits by the Revolution. But she was more fortunate than some of them, who in the evening-tide of life, from the loss of their property, fell into abject poverty.

Another theatrical celebrity, who made her *début* a year or two later, shared with Mdlle. Arnould the enthusiasm and favor of the world of fashion, the philosophic circle and public generally. This was the famous *danseuse*, Mdlle. Guimard. The dancer rivalled the singer in reckless extravagance and dissipation; but beauty was not one of her attributes. Yet she possessed what was termed "infinite fascination," and had as many adorers at her feet as the fair Sophie herself. Her form was sylph-like and perfect in grace; and, for lightness and elegance in her movements and attitudes, she might have served painter or sculptor as a model for the Muse Terpsichore. Connected with her Hôtel No. 9, in the Chaussée d'Antin, she erected an elegant little theatre that comfortably seated five hundred persons, and in spite of the opposition of the four Gentiemen of the King's Bed-chamber—who then regulated theatrical matters—she induced the principal members of the Comédie Française and opera companies to perform at her "Temple de Terpsichore," as she had named her *bijou* theatre.

She gave suppers three times a week—suppers that rivalled the artistic creations of Mouthier for the *petits-appartements*, or those of the more famous Marin, for the entertainment of the friends of the Prince de Soubise. In the costliness of the crystal and plate of her table service; in the taste and elegance of the floral decorations—choice exotics obtained from a distance,

regardless of expense, of course, or products of the conservatories she had built in the grounds of her hôtel—none of the suppers of the *salons* of Paris could bear comparison. The *élite* of both sexes of the dissolute society of the capital were her guests, and Mondays were specially devoted to them. On Wednesdays she received the philosophical world and men of letters, and on Fridays she entertained her theatrical comrades. For several years, at the annual promenade of Longchamps, no equipage was so anxiously looked for as that of this modern Phryne. In expensiveness and elaborate ornamentation, as well as in the beauty of the horses, it surpassed all others, as did also the splendid toilet of its occupant.

Notwithstanding all this ostentation and display, her admirers have declared that she rarely, if ever, overstepped the limits of good taste. Yet when it is borne in mind that this cynosure of all eyes was but an opera-singer parading her ill-gotten wealth in the face of the *élite* of society, one must differ from her admirers, and consider that not only had Mdlle. Guimard very far overstepped the limits of good taste, but that "the *élite*" who looked on her doings so approvingly had themselves lost sight of them. But these were signs of the times.

In 1786 Mdlle. Guimard disposed of her hôtel by lottery. Two thousand five hundred tickets were issued, and sold at a hundred and twenty *francs* each; the whole amounting to twelve thousand pounds. This was previous to accepting an engagement in London, where she appeared, at the Haymarket Opera House, in 1789, being then forty-seven years of age—a rather late period of life to take the town by storm as a sylphide. But the Opera House was burnt down in the



early summer of that year, the prima donna of the ballet and other *danseuses* narrowly escaping a frightful death. Perhaps she felt that her day as a dancer was over; that her airy grace and power of fascination were on the wane. Men's minds were then greatly troubled; the whole country was agitated; and Paris in 1790 would not have looked so complacently on the gilded Longchamps equipage of a *danseuse* as in 1760. Very wisely, therefore, Mdle. Guimard retired from the scene of her many triumphs, married M. Despréaux, the ballet-master, and lived as unpretendingly on the snug little fortune she had saved from the superabundance of former days as she had lived ostentatiously at the brilliant height of her career. One excellent trait in her character should cover a multitude of the follies of her youth—she was truly charitable. During those terrible years that followed her return to Paris she privately, but extensively, relieved the distress of the poor, and comforted the sorrowing with her sympathy—drawing upon herself no attention, but doing her good work quietly and, as it appears, without molestation. She survived until 1816.

## CHAPTER XLII.

Lady Romancists.—“La Nouvelle Héloïse.”—Gallantry and Politeness.—Lackadaisical Vice.—Madame d'Épinay's “Tame Bear.”—Le Baron Grimm.—L'Homme Sauvage in Love.—La Comtesse d'Houdetot.—A Warrior-Poet and his Lady-love.—Le Château de Montmorency.—“Émile” Denounced and Burnt.—Popularity of “Émile.”—“After us the Deluge.”—“Le Contrat Social.”—“I do not Love You, Sir.”—Jean-Jacques Marries Thérèse.—“Devil take Pythagoras!”—Rousseau versus Ragonneau.

THE *fureur* produced by the *débuts* of the *prime donne* of dance and song had scarcely subsided, ere a new sensation was created in the *salons* by the “Nouvelle Héloïse” of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Works of fiction were comparatively few in those days; so that when ladies not deeply tinged with the new philosophy became weary of embroidery and *persiflage*, and desirous of filling up an idle hour or two with a little light reading, they were not perplexed in their choice of a work by an *embarras de richesses*, in the form of an endless list of attractive titles from the French *Mudie* of the day.

Heroics and pastorals had long gone out of fashion. Society had now so many other distractions that it had neither time nor, indeed, the old eager appetite for the consumption of eight or ten goodly-sized volumes, filled with the deeds of valiant knights in the service of beauty oppressed, or with the adven-

tures of a roaming company of gentle shepherds and shepherdesses of high degree. In most instances the slim duodecimo had succeeded the portly quarto. The pen of Madame Riccoboni produced several short romances, and, together with that of Madame Leprince de Beaumont,\* drove into exile the extravagant, but once popular, nightmare stories of the Abbé Prevost. There were also the equivocal "Contes Moraux" of Marmontel; the rhymed bagatelles of Saint-Lambert, and of the Chevalier de Boufflers, author of the favorite tale of "Aline"—afterwards, as "La Reine de Golconde," made the subject of an opera, Aline being one of the original parts of Sophie Arnould.

Rousseau's three octavo volumes † were received with the enthusiasm one would naturally expect from the prevailing false sentimentality of the women of the period, and the thorough moral corruption that pervaded the fashionable world generally. Like many other of the writings of that day, these so-called letters are so repellingly dreary that, except for the chance of meeting with some trait of the manners or feeling of the time, none, probably, would be led to

\* Madame de Beaumont was the sister of the painter, Leprince, whose landscapes and Russian interiors, in the style of Teniers, have been much admired by connoisseurs. It is related of this artist that, being desirous of visiting Russia, he went to Holland, and there embarked for St. Petersburg. On the voyage the vessel was captured by pirates. As they were stripping it and plundering the passengers, whom they were about to make prisoners, Leprince, perceiving they had not thought his violin worth notice, took it up and began to play an adagio. He was a finished performer, and his music so enchanted his captors that to express their admiration they returned his property, and conveyed this modern Arion safely to his destination.

† Third Edition, Amsterdam, 1762,

bestow a glance on them, much less read through the whole of the collection. Some few letters of this kind and descriptions of scenery may be found in them; for the rest, they are nauseously maudlin. The girl Julie, whose letters contain not a trace of girlish feeling or expression (and how should they, emanating from a brain and mind so diseased as poor Jean-Jacques' ?); her ridiculous cousin; the pattern Englishman, Milord Bomston; the amiably imbecile husband, Walmer; and Saint-Preux—Rousseau himself, no doubt, as an imaginary *preux chevalier*—are as uninteresting a set of preaching, whining, miserable sinners as could well be gathered together.

The author's preface to this delightful work is singular. It concludes thus: "If, after reading through this book, any one should presume to blame me for publishing it, he is at liberty to do so, and to tell it to all the world. But let him not come and tell it to me: I feel that, to the end of my life, I could never esteem that man." What a terrible announcement! But "Héloïse" was not written for men. All books, as he says, were at that time written for women: to please and amuse women was every man's object. French gallantry had so decreed; or, more correctly, French politeness. For it was also decreed that a man of the world, while bound to be the slave of every woman's whims, his wife's not excepted, should yet lightly esteem, even contemn, the whole sex. Woman was to him a creature whose arts he knew, and whom he despised, though, as the weaker vessel, he politely placed her on a pedestal, and flattered her vanity by affecting to be her very humble slave and adorer.

Everything, therefore, depended on woman's will and pleasure. No book could succeed, no author,

whatever his merit, acquire literary reputation, unless woman set her seal on it. Poetry, literature, history, philosophy, even politics, no matter what subject, in fact, authors might choose; they had to bear in mind that it must be treated in a style acceptable to pretty women—and few Barthélemys were there among them. The Bible itself had recently been cut up and arranged in *historiettes galantes* for their amusement. Such was then the ascendancy of woman. Jean-Jacques, bowing before it, wrote his "Héloïse" for the edification of the fine ladies of the *salons*. "A corrupt people," he says, "must have romances." His own romance he considered more suited for women than were books of philosophy. And for a time it appears they thought so too. The one subject of conversation was Rousseau's book, and the glowing language in which he had depicted the fervor of intense love. So skilfully had he varnished lackadaisical vice that in his and their eyes it looked almost like, or even better than, virtue itself. "Ah!" exclaimed the ladies, in chorus—

"Que j'aime cet auteur!

Et je vois bien qu'il a le plus grand cœur du monde.

Hélas! faibles humains quels destins sont les nôtres;

Qu'on a mal placé les grandeurs,

Qu'on serait heureux si les cœurs

Étaient faits les uns pour les autres!" \*

Madame d'Épinay's "tame bear," as Jean-Jacques was called, became at once the rage, the pet of the *salons*, and flattery was lavished upon him unsparingly.

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\* "How I love this author! Surely he has the noblest heart in the world. Alas! feeble creatures that we are, what destinies are ours; how grandeur is overrated; how happy we should be if hearts were made for each other!"

He was residing at this time at the hermitage constructed for him at Les Chevrettes, the estate of Madame d'Épinay, in the Vallée de Montmorency. There he had written his "Héloïse," portions of which he occasionally sent to his patroness, who greatly admired his work (as naturally she would), and by extravagant praises in the *salons* heralded it, as it were, and put expectation on tiptoe for its appearance.

Madame d'Épinay was a very fashionable woman, and her *salon* in Paris one of the most brilliant of the wealthy financier class. She had married M. de Lalive de Bellegarde, from whom she was separated. Her *ami intime* was Baron Grimm, then Chargé d'Affaires of the Duc de Gotha. Rousseau, it has been said, introduced him to Madame d'Épinay. But it is far more likely that he was himself introduced by Grimm; for some years before Rousseau first visited Paris, poor and on foot, his hopes of a livelihood based on the acceptance of his system of musical notation, Grimm, then a young man of twenty-two, was a frequenter of its most distinguished *salons*. He had the reputation of being the best-informed man in the capital. It was, indeed, his business to keep himself informed of all that was passing in the court, in society, and, as far as he could, in the ministerial cabinet also. He corresponded with Frederick II. and other sovereigns of the North, from 1753, and was official news-gatherer to the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha; the letters addressed to her passing afterwards, in succession, to seven of the ducal or electoral German courts. An inclination for collecting the reports of the day, and the facilities his position afforded him for obtaining information of greater importance, rendered his correspondence both valuable and interesting.

Rousseau was jealous of Grimm, and of course thought him his enemy. Greater folly still, he fell desperately in love with the Comtesse d'Houdetot, the young sister-in-law of Madame d'Épinay, as she was walking in the park of Montmorency. This lady was deeply tinged with the fashionable philosophy. Plutarch's great men were daily growing more and more into the good graces of the ladies, and Madame d'Houdetot's admiration of them had induced her to surround the garden of her country-seat at Sanois with statues of that noble army of the *élite* of humanity. This may have been an attraction to Jean-Jacques. Surprised, yet amused, to find that she had undesignedly ensnared "*l'homme sauvage*," his awkward attempts to pay his court to her provoked more smiles than frowns. Jean-Jacques thus encouraged, as he fancied, persevered in his suit, waylaid the countess in the park, apprised her of the state of his heart, and, alas! was repelled. None of these great ladies, though privileged at this "epoch of easy manners" to have a train of professed lovers, appears to have been desirous of leading captive poor Rousseau, or accepting him as *ami intime*, even at the height of his favor.

But Thérèse, whose watchful eyes had discovered in his restlessness, his agitation, and unusual attention to toilet, that he was engaged in some affair of which the secret was withheld from her, took the first opportunity of following the gay Lothario. What was her astonishment, poor woman, to see "her man" in hasty pursuit of a fine lady, who, when Jean-Jacques overtook her, turned round and with a merry laugh made him a sort of mocking low courtesy. He, however, seemed ready to fall on his knees before her, while she continued laughing gayly on at the poor woe-begone-

looking creature. Thérèse, as she afterwards said, could scarcely refrain from rushing forward and letting both lady and gentleman know what she thought of them; but she prudently took a different course. She made herself sure that the lady was the Comtesse d'Houdetot, and, being fully persuaded that she was artfully seeking to seduce Jean-Jacques from his allegiance, returned moodily home.

Of the reception he met with on his return to the hermitage, no record has been left. But early on the following morning Thérèse went over to Madame d'Épinay and laid her complaint against Madame la Comtesse, who, she said, was doing her best to deprive her of "her man." Madame d'Épinay was highly indignant, and bade the excited woman be silent. But Thérèse wept and vehemently accused the countess.

"Don't accuse her, my good sister," replied Madame d'Épinay, "Rousseau has turned his own head, all alone, without anybody's help."

Soon all the *salons* of Paris were amused with the tale of the "hapless passion" of "*l'homme sauvage*." There were several versions of it, more or less heart-rending. One of them reached the ears of the countess's lover, the Marquis de Saint-Lambert, the poet. He was then with his regiment in Germany, with the army of the Prince de Soubise. But Mars must yield to the call of Venus, and the warrior-poet delays not a post his return to Paris to fight the battle of his lady-love. Rousseau, with his usual baseness, had written anonymously to Saint-Lambert in disparagement of the countess, who probably had amused herself with a little flirtation with her strange admirer. On the arrival of the incensed lover, Rousseau concealed himself; but finding that reparation was seriously de-



manded, he, as was also his custom when treated with the contempt he so often merited for his slander and falsehood, humbly asked pardon; content to bear in moody silence any humiliations that were put upon him.

On this occasion he revenged himself by maligning his benefactress, Madame d'Épinay. Grimm denounced him in the *salons*, and he and the women—Thérèse and her vulgar mother—were compelled to quit the hermitage. But to be the talk of the *salons*, to occupy public attention, no matter whether creditable or otherwise, was to Jean-Jacques as the breath of life. It helped also to spread the popularity of his *Héloïse*, and to increase his literary fame. The more eccentric he became, the more curiosity his book excited. After a short stay at an inn, the Duc and Duchesse de Luxembourg offered him a retreat in the ancient Château of Montmorency. Jean-Jacques gladly accepted it, and there he wrote his “*Émile*.” It was printed in Holland, the proofs being addressed under cover to the Director-General of the King's Library—M. de Malesherbes—whose duty it was to repress works believed to be of an objectionable character.

M. de Malesherbes, however, took a different view of his duties; though it may have been in accordance with that of the minister in power. For the “*Encyclopédie Philosophique*” being a second time suspended, at the instance of the dauphin, and an order issued to search the house where Diderot lived, and to seize his papers, Malesherbes gave the Encyclopædist a day's notice of it, and told him to send them to his bureau, where there would, of course, be no suspicion of their being concealed. But the suspen-

sion was temporary only; the dauphin was powerless when M. de Choiseul and Madame de Pompadour thought fit to differ from his views and opinions.

When "Émile" appeared, it was voted a drowsy book. In "Émile" the ladies looked for another Saint-Preux. Few persons were tempted to wade through four volumes of impracticable suggestions on parental duties. But the dauphin appears to have been one of the few. He vehemently denounced "Émile" as "an outrage against the laws of the family and society," and "Émile" had the honor of being publicly burnt on the Place de Grève. This made its success. Immediately all France was desirous of reading "Émile." Edition after edition was smuggled in from Holland, without satisfying the eager demand for it, and it was translated into several languages. It seems extraordinary that a work, harmless in its very extravagance, should have occasioned so great a commotion.

Other causes had long been acting on the public mind, and gradually producing throughout the nation that restlessness of feeling which culminated in the Revolution. Everything, therefore, that seemed to aim at pulling down the established order of things was sure of an enthusiastic reception, and especially from the class that hoped to profit most by the change. But it was to the Jesuits, who, through their patron, the dauphin, made such a stir in their condemnation of the book, that "Émile" mainly owed its popularity. They hoped to alarm by it the conscience of the king, whose signature to the decree for the expulsion of their Order from France was still delayed. He was terrified at his own temerity in this act. This they knew. A very slight matter might turn the scale in their favor. For Louis XV. inclined first to one side,

then to the other, as the opposing parties prevailed in the struggle—the Jesuits, in their efforts to prevent their expulsion; the minister and the favorite, in their determination to accomplish it.

The education of youths of the higher classes of French society had long been in the hands of the Jesuits. Simultaneously with their expulsion, should such a system as that advocated by the author of "Émile" be introduced into the country, what incalculable evils might not the godless project be fraught with for France! "After us the deluge," replied the king—"let the dauphin see to that;" and, after a little further hesitation, he signed the decree. Had Louis XV. read "Émile"? He might have taken it up when his fits of *ennui* were strongest, and have extracted from it a few hearty laughs. Though prosy and didactical, yet "Émile" is amusing. Those who have not read it should get it at once; it is as enlivening as many a dull novel. A French writer has termed Jean-Jacques' educational—or, rather, non-educational—system as calculated to produce a nation of "thieves or imbeciles"—men fit for the pillory or idiot asylum. Happily it is a system so utterly impracticable that it may, therefore, be laughed at.

Voltaire tried to read "Émile," but found it too wearisome. "Your mad-brained Jean-Jacques," he wrote to M. Bardes, "has written but one good thing in his life—his 'Vicaire Savoyard.' Depend upon it that the wretch who let his children die in an almshouse in spite of the pity of one who wished to succor them is a monster of arrogance, baseness, and contradictions." Voltaire was probably right.

"Le Contrat Social" appeared in the same year, 1762. It was said to be a translation or development

of the doctrines of the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century—a theory of government as impracticable as his theory of education.

The warrant once supposed to have been issued by the Parliament of Paris for the arrest of Jean-Jacques, after the condemnation and burning of his “*Émile*,” and which, when he was privately informed of it, induced him to accept from the Duc de Vendôme the temporary shelter of the Temple, was but a practical joke of the Prince de Conti and the Marquis de Saint-Lambert. The Temple still preserved its privilege as a sanctuary, or place of refuge for debtors and others, against the pursuit of the Parliament; and it amused the prince, of whose acquaintance and professed friendship Rousseau was so vain, to immure him there, and frighten him with a prospect of a lodging in the Bastille. He affected to assist him to escape from France, and Jean-Jacques and his womankind fled with all haste to Switzerland. He behaved there so arrogantly, and made himself so offensively conspicuous, that he was expelled the republic, and his books were burnt at Geneva.

Voltaire offered him an asylum. A friendly welcome, he said, awaited him, and that at Ferney he might write and philosophize at his ease. Jean-Jacques replied, “I do not love you, sir. You corrupt my republic with your plays.” “Our friend Jean-Jacques,” said Voltaire, “is even more mad than I supposed.” From Switzerland he went to Holland. A letter from Amsterdam, of June, 1762, says, “The arrogant Jean-Jacques is here. But the Dutch take far more interest in a cargo of pepper than in him and his paradoxes.” England was his next resting-place; but everywhere he fancied himself pursued and perse-

cuted by a host of imaginary enemies. He was hospitably received by Hume, the historian, and created by his eccentricities and "incredible blunders" the sensation that was so gratifying to him. The particulars of his visit, and his disagreement with Hume, whose family did not reckon on receiving Thérèse into their circle, may be found in the writings of Hume, Horace Walpole, and other writers of the period. Space is wanting in these pages to follow him step by step.

Thérèse, as the result of her visit to England, became legally the wife of Rousseau at Amiens. She had threatened to leave him, declaring she could no longer bear the contempt and disdain which she everywhere met with. So Jean-Jacques yielded to prejudice. In the course of the twenty years she had passed with him, Thérèse had acquired over Rousseau the kind of power that a nurse exercises over a child. They returned to Paris under the assumed name of Renou. But no one interfered with him; he had fled from a shadow. He and Madame Jean-Jacques lodged in the Rue de la Plâtrière. Professedly he was now a copier of music; and the ladies of the fashionable world made this employment, in which he excelled, a pretext for peering into the arrangements of his little household.

Rousseau did not like the English before he had visited their country. He liked them still less afterwards. In "Émile" he speaks of the brutal character of the English. "They call themselves," he says, "a good-natured people." No other nation, however, he imagines, "will ever agree with them in this good opinion of themselves." He attributes their brutality to a too great fondness for beef and mutton. Duclos,

who had been reading "Émile," amused Madame de Pompadour by repeating the "fine passage," as he termed it, in which Rousseau renews the attacks of Pythagoras against the use of animal food. Seduced, he said, by his eloquence and the great saving of expense it promised, he determined to try it.

He bought a pound of cherries for his dinner. Finding himself pretty well the next day, he dined on another pound. Resolved to persevere, though he began to feel a craving for a slice of beef or the wing of a fowl, he continued the same regimen for nearly a week. Sunday arrived. It had been his custom to have his dinner sent in on that day to his apartment, and he had given no orders to the contrary. "I had just swallowed a morsel of bread and some cherries," he said, "and drunk a glass of water, when my cook and his boy made their appearance with soup and broiled chicken, beef and salad, with other et ceteras. "Devil take Pythagoras!" I exclaimed. "Come in, come in, Ragonneau, you are much more sensible than Rousseau." "Rousseau!" replied the man. "Rousseau! My dear sir, he's a save-all; a spoil-sauce; as sure as my name is Ragonneau."

The Rousseau M. Ragonneau so disdained was a rival cook; of whose culinary reputation he was no less jealous than was Voltaire of the undeserved celebrity, as he considered, of Jean-Jacques.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

A Humiliating Usage.—An Empty Title.—Failing Health and Spirits.—A Wearying Part to Play.—The *quasi* Queen of France.—Manufactures Royales.—A Distinguished Artist.—Insensibility of Louis XV.—“Was she about to Die?”—Death of Mdme. de Pompadour.—Engravings of Mdme. de Pompadour.

ARMIES destroyed; an exhausted treasury; ever-increasing difficulty in levying and collecting the taxes; lands lying waste; and murmuring and discontent everywhere rife, at last put an end to the war. At the close of the seventh campaign, the Duc de Nivernois was despatched to London with proposals of peace.

Apparently Madame de Pompadour had not very closely examined the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle; for great was her indignation, after having perused the preliminary Treaty of Paris, handed to her by M. de Choiseul. An ardent Frenchwoman, she would have gone forth sword in hand, as she said, and compelled the English and their king to respect France and her sovereign.

“Are not the stipulations of this disgraceful peace sufficiently humiliating to France, that there should be added to the loss of her colonies the further dishonor of George the Third’s assumption of the title of her king?”

“Louis XIV. permitted it,” replied M. de Choiseul.

“Incredible !” rejoined the incensed lady.

“Madame, it is mere ceremonial—following the ancient diplomatic usage.”

“A humiliating usage, which must be tolerated no longer, unless to the sole title now left to Louis XV. of ‘Most Christian King’ there be added King of England, in exchange for King of France, of which they have deprived him.”

“Madame, his majesty is assured, as I would now assure you, that when circumstances are favorable this formal ceremonial shall be abolished. At present they are not. We have now, unfortunately, to give consideration to things more important, and which affect far more deeply the honor and welfare of our country and our king.”

The long retention by the English sovereigns of the empty title of King of France was certainly no less foolish than offensive. But the supposed pretensions of George III. did not excite in Louis XV. the same indignation as in Madame de Pompadour when she discovered how “M. de Betfort” had dared to name his master in this treaty, and M. de Nivernois the baseness to allow him; well knowing that the resources of France would still allow Louis XV. to appear in the field to efface the stain cast upon himself and his people. And it is probable that a war for that purpose would have been a popular war, and Frenchmen have fought more desperately for an idea of that kind than to save Silesia for Marie Thérèse.

However, the treaty, with all its hard conditions, was signed in Paris on the 10th of February, 1763. On the 15th Austria and Prussia concluded a separate treaty, signed at Hubertsburg; and the Seven Years’



War was ended—Prussia, though Frederick retained Silesia, being more thoroughly exhausted by this contest than either France or Austria. Frederick II., in his “Mémoires,” says of his kingdom that its condition at this time could be represented only “under the image of a man covered with wounds, weakened by loss of blood, and ready to sink.” What a scourge to a nation is a “great” king!

Madame de Pompadour—disappointed in the objects for which, in the interests of Marie Thérèse, the war was undertaken; accused of having brought misery and distress on France, and occasioned the loss of her colonies—after the signing of the Peace, seemed to lose much of the energy of character and animation of spirit for which hitherto she had been so remarkable, and which had rarely failed of their cheering effect on the king. It was by an effort that she now took her accustomed share in the *fêtes* and entertainments, and in the revelry that, notwithstanding the lamentable ending of the war, and the general outcry that France was ruined, all classes plunged into. Versailles, with its pestilent freshets, had always more or less affected her health, and it was only by frequent change of air that she had been able to reside there at all.

For some years she had been regarded less as the *maîtresse-en-titre* of Louis XV. than as first minister of State, or even regent of the kingdom; for so little was seen of the king, he might almost as well have been absent. If he ever interfered in public affairs, it was but to create embarrassment; sometimes expressing his opinions in council, but leaving them to be adopted or rejected as his ministers thought fit. It was to Madame de Pompadour he looked to en-

force his views, when he had any. From her he received, in a form that amused him as chit-chat, a *résumé* of the business of State. Anything like dreary official routine had become abhorrent to him. Hers, too, was the task, when fits of *ennui* or weary-mindedness pressed very heavily on him, to devise a means of captivating his attention, and, by the force of brightness in her own mind, chasing the gloom from his.

But what a wearying part to play! What vitality of spirit, what inexhaustive fancy it demanded! What strength of will, too, to overcome the repugnance that wearied nature must sometimes have opposed to this unflagging task of near twenty years' duration—a task whose aim was the exercise and retention of power; the wielding of a sceptre snatched from the grasp of a feeble king; the direction of the affairs of a nation, and the subjugation of its ruler to her will! To prepare amusements, ever varying, for the king's entertainment in the evening, when his *petits-soupers* were ended and apathy began to steal over him, her mornings were passed with painters, singers, dancers, musicians, actors and actresses—professional people of every class. Her artistic imagination was ever inventing new pleasures and diversions “to prevent this *fainéant* king from encountering himself.” Louis XV., in fact, when in his brightest moods existed on a borrowed frame of mind, derived from the efforts of Madame de Pompadour to ward off his ever-recurring fits of gloom.

Besides this, the arrival of despatches; political or clerical intrigues, and public affairs generally, required her daily attendance in her study. At any hour she might be summoned to grant interviews to the minis-

ters of the various departments; to receive a foreign ambassador or secretary of state. Maréchals and generals who owed their appointments to her presented themselves to pay their respects to this *quasi* Queen of France, on joining the army or returning from it. The lawyers of the rebellious parliaments laid their complaints before her more clearly and dispassionately than before the king; and the wealthy financiers, of whom the nearly bankrupt state borrowed money, arranged these transactions, in the first instance, with her.

All this was patent to the nation at large, and truly it placed the king before his subjects in a very contemptible light; but it does not give the right to heap opprobrium on Madame de Pompadour as the cause of all the vices of Louis XV., and of the misfortunes of France. She was the most talented and accomplished woman of her time; distinguished above all others for her enlightened patronage of science and of the arts; also for the encouragement she gave to the development of improvements in various manufactures which had stood still or were on the decline, until, favored by her, a fresh impulse was given to further progress, and a perfection attained which has never since been surpassed, and, in fact, rarely equalled.

Les Gobelins; the carpets of the Savonnerie; the Porcelaine de Sèvres, were all, at her request, declared *Manufactures royales*. Some of the finest specimens of the products of Sèvres, in ornamental groups of figures, were modelled and painted by Madame de Pompadour as a present to the queen. Boucher, whose taste and fancy were well adapted for work of that kind, sketched many a charming little

picture for the principal pieces of Madame de Pompadour's table service of Porcelaine de Sèvres. The name of Pompadour is, indeed, intimately associated with a whole school of art of the Louis Quinze period—art so inimitable in its grace and elegance that it has stood the test of time, and remains unsurpassed. Artists and poets and men of science vied with each other in their admiration of her taste and talents. And it was not mere flattery, but simply the praise due to an enlightened patroness and a distinguished artist.

“If,” as says M. Bungener, “one could forget under what title she accomplished her task, it would be considered grand and honorable.” But even as the king's *maitresse-en-titre*—bearing in mind what were the manners and morals of aristocratic society—there was not a woman of rank in the court of Louis XV. who had the right to cast a stone at her. On the contrary, from that much-envied though unenviable position which it was both her fault and her misfortune to have coveted, Madame de Pompadour, simple *bourgeoise*, might have looked down with disdain on those who bore the proudest names in the land. It was no ordinary woman who, in such a position, could for twenty years have maintained her ascendancy over such a man as Louis XV.; have borne sway undiminished in a court so intriguing and Jesuitical; and ruled with ever-increasing power and influence in the councils of such a kingdom as France.

Bodily fatigue and mental anxiety acting on a naturally delicate constitution threw her at last into a decline. Her spirits drooped. Yet, as long as possible, she smiled and was gay to cheer her royal lover, and conceal her sufferings from him. At times she had thoughts of leaving the court. “I weep,” she

wrote to the Marquise de Fontenailles—"I weep often over the ambition which brought me to this place, and the ambition which keeps me here." She believed that the king would stoically support the news of her death, but would find her illness insupportable. He had shown so little emotion when his eldest daughter, Madame Royale, married to the Duke of Parma, had paid him a visit after some years of absence from France, and immediately after her arrival at Versailles took the small-pox and died. The Duc de Bourgogne, eldest son of the dauphin, had a year or two before, while at play, met with an accident that occasioned his death at the age of ten years. Louis was but slightly affected. There was the Duc de Berri to take his place, and there were two younger sons to take his, should aught befall him.

Unable to bear up against increasing weakness, Madame de Pompadour retired to Choisy. Her physician, Quesnay, thought it his duty to inform the king of her illness, and that it was of a nature that could hardly fail to bring her rapidly to the grave. Louis was astonished. "To the grave?" he repeated, inquiringly. She, so brilliant, so *spirituelle*; whose light laughter and animating voice had so recently been the life and soul of his circle of intimates, and under whose spell darkness and gloom vanished, as by enchantment, from his own moody mind!—was she about to die? He was incredulous. But with more anxiety than was looked for from him, he would not allow that she should remain at Choisy. She must be tenderly conveyed to Versailles, even should she die there. Tenderly, too, he received her, and with affectionate anxiety, apparently, watched the fluctuations of that deceptive malady, consumption.

The occasional gleams of hope became fewer and briefer, and on the morning of the 15th of April, 1764, Madame de Pompadour, then in her forty-second year, very tranquilly breathed her last. The priest who had been reading to her perceiving, as he thought, that she was dozing, was about quietly to leave the room. Conscious of this, she opened her eyes, and inspired, doubtless, by some warning sensation that the final moment was at hand, said, "Wait, my father, we will go together." A quarter of an hour elapsed. The priest had then taken his departure, and the king, informed that his mistress was no more, was gazing fixedly upon her—momentarily, it is said, he betrayed some emotion.

His attention to her in her last illness makes it likely that he should have felt a pang of regret at her death—more likely far than that he made the remark attributed to him on the departure of her plain funeral procession from Versailles. Stepping out on the balcony to look at it, the weather being dark and cloudy at the time, it is reported that he said gayly, "Madame has unpleasant weather for her journey." She was buried by the side of her daughter in the chapel of the Convent of the Capucines, then in the Rue des Petits-Champs, but since destroyed. Madame de Pompadour left a very large fortune. Her hôtel, afterwards Elysée Bourbon, she bequeathed to the king, with a very fine collection of fine stones, engraved by Guay. She left pensions to her physician, her intendant, and others. All persons connected with her household were provided for according to the positions they held in it, and very valuable souvenirs were given to many of her friends.

The bulk of her property was inherited by her

brother, who, with the Prince de Soubise, to whom she bequeathed a diamond of great value, was her executor. She possessed the finest cabinet of medals in Europe, and her library, rich in rare MSS. and choice editions, was valued even then at upwards of a million of *francs*. The sale of her collection of antique furniture, and art treasures of the rarest kind, lasted six months. A small edition of a series of sixty-three plates—etchings—engraved by herself, after *intagli* by Guay, was printed for presents to friends, who eagerly sought a souvenir of a woman remarkable in her life, and whose career forms a portion of history.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

“ Ah! Poor Duchesse!”—Mdlle. de Lespinasse.—Singularly Affectionate.—A Tale of Sentimental Love.—“ Behold Your Queen!”—A Horrid Thing to have Nerves.—The Aristocratic Author.—L’Abbé Maury’s First Sermon.—Madame Doublet de Persan.—Distraction for the Dauphin.—Death of the Dauphin.—M. Thomas’s Eulogy of the Dauphin.—Piron’s Tribute of Laudation.—Death of King Stanislaus.—Bossuet Parodied.

WHAT great question is this that so agitates the court of Louis XV., that interests both the queen and the princesses? Even the dauphin is anxious for its solution—the course of philosophism and Jesuitism being likely, for good or for evil, to be influenced by it. It is discussed with much eagerness in the *salons*. Attention is absorbed by it, and no other subject is listened to. Will it occasion a further expansion of the *panier*, or bring more generally into favor the diminished amplitude of the hoop? Will head-dresses rise a foot higher, or descend in the same proportion?

Then, mysterious hints, nods, and glances, with which artful womankind often veils her own views, are employed by many an ambitious fair dame, to indicate that an intimate acquaintance or bosom friend actually hopes for a successful result to her persistent efforts to take up the fallen sceptre of the late duchesse.

“ Poor duchesse!” sighs Mdlle. de Lespinasse, who is reclining on a sofa in the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin.



Every five minutes or so she does a stitch or two of embroidery, and in the intervals glances at a book which lies open beside her, and which is Sterne's "Sentimental Journey." This lady is the *amie intime* of the philosopher d'Alembert, in whose *salon* she presides; also at his weekly Encyclopædical dinners. She is herself a philosopher, very learned, and shares with d'Alembert and Diderot the editing of that wonderful work of the eighteenth century, "L'Encyclopédie Philosophique." For some two or three years past, twice a week, she has kept Madame Geoffrin in countenance at her dinners to the men of letters and men of the world. She is the only lady invited on these occasions. Madame Geoffrin had observed, she said, that a number of ladies at a dinner-party was very distracting to the gentlemen. Conversation, instead of being general, became broken, scattered, fragmentary, and wearisome. She was fond of unity herself, and she found that her guests were also.

Madame Geoffrin, therefore, took the centre of her dinner-table, and opposite to her placed her charming friend, Mdlle. de Lespinasse. Both these ladies had a wonderful talent for leading and sustaining conversation. They played into each other's hands, and kept the flow of soul equably flowing: not impetuously to interfere with the enjoyment of the good cheer Madame Geoffrin set before her friends, but just enough to incite that pleasant state of feeling that allows good digestion to wait on appetite. She had no objection to the presence of ladies at the *petits-soupers* after her reception. Then they were welcome guests—always, of course, brilliant women and the flower of the great world.

Mdlle. de Lespinasse was reputed of noble birth. But

her escutcheon bore a bar sinister, like that of her friend d'Alembert. She had, however, been very well educated, and was brought from Burgundy by Madame du Deffant, when first threatened with blindness, to reside with her as companion. She was then just twenty. The philosophers and other frequenters of the *salon* very soon made it clear to the "clairvoyant blind woman," as Voltaire called the marquise, that they preferred the conversation of the younger lady to hers. Mdlle. de Lespinasse had no beauty of face. She was remarkably plain, and much marked with the small-pox—a common disfigurement at that time—but she had very fine eyes and beautiful hair. She was tall and of an elegant figure, and dressed with excellent taste. Her voice was pleasing. She possessed a wonderfully winning tongue, and as La Harpe and other admirers said, and a voluminous collection of love-letters attest, "a singularly affectionate soul," for eventually she died of love and grief for a lover's death, and left a group of lovers, distracted with love, to lament her loss.

She had been ten years with Madame du Deffant, when it appeared that Walpole was becoming enchanted also. The old marquise could not tolerate that. Disagreements, not to say quarrels, ensued; when d'Alembert, being as madly in love as a philosopher well could be, carried off Mdlle. de Lespinasse, and gave her a *salon* to preside in. Through the interest of the philosophical minister, Choiseul, he obtained for her a pension from the king's privy purse—her claim to it, probably, being her "singularly affectionate soul;" for in her quality of sub-editor of the Encyclopædia, and d'Alembert's aide-de-camp, she could hardly excite much interest in the king.

But to return to the sofa where we left the lady with her favorite author, pining away, sentimentally in love with two or three philosophers and as many handsome cavaliers; each one convinced that it is he who reigns supreme in that gentle damsel's heart, and he alone who inspires those eloquently passionate *billets-doux* in which to each and all she pours forth the tender tale of her heart's woes. Once more Mdlle. de Lespinasse sighs forth "Poor duchesse!" for Madame de Pompadour is still the theme of the scandal-mongers of the *salon*.

"Why 'poor duchesse'?" inquires rather brusquely a friend who sits near her. "Why should you pity her? Very recently I saw her dance, or I should say perform, the 'Menuet de la Cour' with the most grandly impertinent air in the world. Clairon's ridiculous '*grande révérence*,' which we hear so much of, is not to be compared, for pretentious dignity, with Madame de Pompadour's courtesy. It was a courtesy, certainly; but invested with an air that seemed to say to all present, 'Behold your queen!'"

"Marmontel," began Mdlle. de Lespinasse, apologetically—

"Marmontel," interrupts this chatterer of the *salon*, "sings her praises, I know—she appointed him Historian of France—now dry your eyes, mademoiselle: your poor duchesse was but a little *bourgeoise*, who had caught a certain air of the court—what is Marmontel but a *bourgeois*? He is the friend, too, of that brother, the disdainful Marigny, now richer than the king; in fact, as rich as a Jew, and going to marry a Mdlle. Filleul, a cousin or friend, or sister-in-law, or something of that kind, of Marmontel's—a *bourgeoise*, of course. He dared not condescend to such a marriage as that—con-

descend, you know—while his sister, the poor duchesse was living. I hear that the king is really concerned at her death, though he affected gayety and nonchalance for a day or two. Her apartments are closely shut up, by his order, and he proposes never to reopen them—but time will show. To keep up his spirits he has doubled his usual daily dose of champagne, and Richelieu spends his mornings in comforting him.”

“The old duke will comfort him, if anybody can. He says the king told him—Richelieu keeps no secrets, you know—that ‘although he had sometimes felt that Madame de Pompadour’s opinions had more weight in the councils of France than his own, yet her fondness for power of that kind was so intense that to deprive her of it would have been her death. She had statesman-like qualities, he said, and he had more confidence in her than in his ministers.’ But this and much more must be known to you, mademoiselle. You philosophers know everything. Ah! I perceive you are again in tears. You suffer from nerves, I believe, like the rest of us. It is a horrid thing to have nerves, is it not? Dear me! what will d’Alembert say if he perceives that I have unconsciously made you weep? or le Comte—’

“Ah! madame, I beg of you—”

“Well, I will not breathe his name. You are far too sensitive, my dear—M. de Buffon is here this evening, I see—as usual, in full dress; and, as usual, in his favorite arm-chair; reposing on his cane, with his eyes on the ceiling; a benignant smile on his face, and his thoughts up in the clouds, in pursuit of an effective turn for an unsettled phrase now coursing rebelliously through his brain. That horrid Jean-Jacques, you know, when he visited Montbard, Buffon being absent,

fell on his knees and kissed the door-step of his study. He imagined him '*l'homme de la nature*' in the same sense as himself, when they are far as the poles asunder. Look for a moment on le Comte de Buffon, the type of the 'aristocratic author.' Look at his frill and ruffles of fine point-lace; his embroidered vest; silk stockings, gold shoe-buckles, cocked hat, and gold-headed cane. Then fancy Jean-Jacques, in his slatternly robe and caftan, tramping about Paris, with all the blackguards of the capital at his heels, and thinking it fame. For my part, I love him not."

"There are Buffon and Diderot side by side. Ah! what a striking contrast!—would not you say that Buffon had just left the court, and Diderot the tavern?"

"Diderot is a great man," replies Mdlle. de Lespinasse with as severe an air as she can assume.

"According to Voltaire—yes; but are you aware that the insults he calls criticisms have just killed poor Carle Vanloo, and that with less judgment than spite he decries the really pleasing pictures of Carle's nephew, Michel Vanloo? Boucher has now Vanloo's post of "first painter to the king"—a new grief for Diderot.\* Good-night, my dear, I perceive M. le Comte gazing at me imploringly. I mercifully give up my seat to him. Ah! yet another moment. Have you heard of the sermon last night at Madame du Deffant's house?"

"A sermon! No, madame."

"As you know, she affects to keep up in her *salon*, as far as this degenerate age permits, the long-ago-forgotten traditions of the once-famed Hôtel de Rambouillet. You remember, no doubt, the incident of

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\* Boucher died in 1770, suddenly—brush in hand, and alone in his satin-draped *boudoir-atelier*—before a picture he was painting of "Venus à sa Toilette."

young Bossuet preaching there his first sermon, extemporized at ten minutes' notice, to an assembly of great ladies and their cavaliers. Well, the poor old blind marquise revived this scene last night in her *salon*, for the edification of the fine ladies and their *amis intimes* there assembled; the hero of it being a young abbe of nineteen, recently arrived in Paris, and caught for the occasion by Pont de Veyle. Wonderful lungs, and already a good philosopher, I hear; his name, I believe, Maury. Again, good-night—d'Alembert will tell you more about it—M. de Guibert, I see, grows impatient."

All the court news gleaned at Versailles, all the chit-chat and gossip of the capital, served for conversation, comment, and amplification in the Parisian *salons* in the evening. In the *salon* of Madame Doublet de Persan, who for forty years inhabited an "outside apartment" of the convent of Les Filles de St. Thomas, two registers were always lying open, for contributions of news that her visitors might have gathered in Paris, or elsewhere, in the course of the day. One register was labelled "doubtful reports;" the other, "trustworthy information." Under the direction of Petit de Bachaumont, the scraps of news were arranged under different heads, and copied in a legible hand. These manuscript sheets of "Nouvelles à la Main" were then despatched per post to the provinces, and, distributed by Madame's servants, had an extensive sale in Paris. It was from materials thus obtained that Bachaumont wrote his "Mémoires Secrets." His friend, Madame Doublet, lived to nearly a century, and died at last in the convent. Her newsletters circulated in France for near forty years, and her *salon* was frequented by many persons of celebrity

and of extreme opinions. But it was not a fashionable *salon*, or reunion of the *beau monde*. The Lieutenant of Police usually kept a watchful eye on it; for though no gambler, schemer, or philosopher herself, her doors were hospitably open to all of them.

But at this time news was scarce, and, except for the question, "Who shall succeed her?" the court was dull; the king was gloomy, and little was seen or known of him. The dauphin, whose health was never robust, had taken so deeply to heart the dissolution in France of the Society of Jesus that it was reported he was falling into a decline. He had experienced another vexation in the greater alienation that now existed between him and his father, besides continued deep grief for the loss of his eldest son. A camp was then forming at Compiègne, and the king at last consented to allow him to gratify his military tastes, and to seek distraction in superintending the new manœuvres about to be introduced into the French army. Emancipated from the restraint he had so long endured, and which at his age (thirty-six) must have been extremely trying, he entered on his new duties and occupations with so much zeal that his weak constitution gave way under the unusual fatigues imposed on it. He returned to Versailles at the end of the autumn, worn and weary, and after languishing for a few weeks, died on the 20th of December, 1765.

From one end of France to the other, the pulpits resounded with the praises of the dauphin. He had rather prematurely announced his intention of pursuing with extremest rigor the enemies of religion; and of the throne—when he should sit on it. He was, therefore, the hope of the Jesuits. And the clergy generally were anxious at his death to raise him to

the honor of saintship. In exalting so greatly the virtues of the son, they condemned the vices of the king. Louis XV. felt this; but its only effect was to increase his dislike to that son, whose death, as he told Choiseul, affected him but little, though, for form's sake, he thought it right to remain for awhile in seclusion.

The saint of the Jesuits seemed likely to become the saint of their enemies, the philosophers. M. Thomas, the academician, in his eulogy on the dauphin, spoke of him in terms so exaggerated that the philosophic brotherhood accused him of having "rather unmasked the batteries." "If the prince," said Diderot, "really merited a hundredth part of the praise M. Thomas has lavished upon him, who in this world ever resembled, or could hope to resemble, him? But can any one approve such a mass of hyperbole, of which the falsehood is so strikingly evident? What sort of opinion must the father, who well knew his son's faults, form of men of letters, when one of the honestest among them can without shame make up his mind to stand forth and lie to a whole nation? His sisters, too? And his wife? As for his valets, they will but laugh at it."

Grimm, as characteristically, but with less vehemence, remarked, "If, in good faith, M. Thomas believes that the dauphin possessed a fourth of the qualities he has ascribed to him, it is very certain that he is no descendant of Thomas the apostle." By degrees the prince—whose character the king described as more Polish than French—was idealized by the philosophers, until they had made him one of themselves. The books he openly denounced were declared to have been, in secret, his constant companions and his most diligent study. Locke "On the Human Understanding," of which, in translation, he and the



Jesuits had been strenuously active in preventing the circulation in France, was never out of his hands, they said, in the privacy of his study, and was dearer to him than his prayer-book—generally supposed to have been dearest of all. Even Piron took up his pen to laud the dauphin. But it was not the pen of the Piron of former days. Following the fashion of the beauties of his time, Piron had forsaken the sins of his youth, and in his latter years was grown devout. Instead of seeking for Piron, as of old, in the taverns, those who now wanted him sought the old sinner in the churches. His tribute of laudation to the dauphin took the form of sacred poetry, in which, naturally, no low jest was allowed to intrude. He imagined the prince in heaven, and put into his mouth a magnificently pious and lugubrious tirade. But what was Piron without his scurrility and his licentious wit? "If the dauphin in paradise was occupied in making and reciting such poetry as that," it was remarked, "he would surely take precedence of M. de Voltaire."

On the 23d of February, 1766, two months after the death of her son, poor Marie Leczinska lost her father, King Stanislaus. He was eighty-eight years of age; but the circumstances of his death made it more affecting. Alone in his dressing-room, and seated near the hearth on which some large logs of wood were burning, his *robe-de-chambre* took fire. He was infirm, unable to aid himself, and his cries for assistance were not immediately heard. When his servant returned to him, he found the old king, who had made great efforts to extinguish the flames, lying on the floor, his hands and legs very much burnt. The pain of his wounds produced fever, and he died after lingering a few days in agony. Stanislaus was greatly beloved in Lorraine. It had become a cus-

tom with many of the nobility of the French court, and other wealthy persons, to make frequent visits to his little capital, which he had taken so much pride in embellishing. His loss was therefore felt at Versailles far beyond the intimate circle of the queen.

The funeral discourse delivered on that occasion by the Père Élisée momentarily turned a distressing catastrophe into a subject for mirth. Thinking, probably, to produce an effect similar to that caused by Bossuet, when he began the celebrated oration on the death of Madame Henriette d'Angleterre—"O disastrous, O dreadful night! when, like the crash of thunder, that awful cry resounded, Madame has destroyed herself! Madame is dead!" the Père Élisée began. "O day! O frightful moment! when we heard resound about us long sobs interrupted by these sad words: The king's clothes are on fire! his life is in danger! the king is dangerously ill!"—a ridiculous parody, that provoked subdued laughter. As observed by Boulogne, to make it still more perfect he should have said, "The king is burning; the king is burnt."

Death was very busy at that time in the family of Louis XV. In March, 1767, the dauphine died, to the extreme grief of the queen, who lost in her almost her only companion and friend. Her daughters were restless, and dissatisfied with their position—ill brought up in the Convent of Fontevault, and their education neglected. In the following year the queen also died. Her malady, apparently, was a deep and settled grief, a gradual pining away. On the 24th of June, 1768, it terminated in death, for which, motionless, speechless, she had lain for weeks anxiously, as it seemed, longing and waiting.

## CHAPTER XLV.

Birth of Napoleon Buonaparte.—“Forming” a Queen of France.

—The Empress Marie Thérèse.—Madame d’Esparbés Unmasked.—Rival Intrigantes.—Noble Hopes O’erthrown.—Retribution Exacted.—Installing the Favorite.—A Favorite’s Privileges.—Enter La Comtesse du Barry.—The Hair-dresser in a Difficulty.—“La Belle Bourbonnaise.”

IT had been generally expected that, at the death of Madame de Pompadour, the favor which M. de Choiseul had for six years enjoyed with the king would come to an end; and, in the natural course of things, the reign of a new favorite usher in a new ministry. Four years had now passed away. The apartments of Madame de Pompadour yet remained closed, and the Ministère Choiseul, more compact than any perhaps that had hitherto held power in France, was still supreme.

M. de Choiseul’s unfailing flow of spirits; his wonderful self-confidence; the tact with which he managed the king—relieving him of all anxiety, and setting things before him in a pleasant and satisfactory light—had obtained him so much influence that, although surrounded by enemies watching eagerly for his downfall, M. de Choiseul was master of France, or as it was customary to say, “He possessed the king.” As a minister he has been considered more brilliant than able; endowed with many agreeable qualities which as a man of the world made him popular in so-

ciety, but deficient in the more solid ones that should characterize a statesman. One of the later acts of his ministry was the successful arrangement of the union of Corsica to France, after much opposition in the island and the hopeless struggle of the brave Paoli for freedom. On the 15th of August, 1768, this union was proclaimed, and on its first anniversary was born the man who, it may be said, was destined to unite France to Corsica—Napoleon Buonaparte.

After the death of the queen, Choiseul was anxious that Louis XV. should marry an Austrian archduchess. Mesdames the king's daughters were desirous of fixing his attention on the young Duchesse de Lamballe, the widowed daughter-in-law of the Duc de Penthièvre. This would have been a morganatic marriage; but the king did not incline to either proposal. He declared also that he was not disposed to follow the example of his predecessor. To ensure his continuance in power in the event of a change of rulers, the duke obtained the king's consent to negotiate with M. de Kaunitz the marriage of the dauphin, the Duc de Berri, with the Archduchess Marie Antoinette, the youngest daughter of the empress-queen. Both Kaunitz and Choiseul claimed for themselves the highest political merit for thus powerfully cementing, as they imagined, the union between the two crowns and countries.

The dauphin was then little more than thirteen years of age, and Marie Antoinette twelve. The young archduchess was born on an ill-omened day, the 2d of November, 1755; that fatal All-Souls' Day when Lisbon, with 30,000 of the people, was destroyed by the great earthquake—an event which struck terror into the hearts of the inhabitants of every city in Europe.

When the marriage was arranged, the actors Aufresne and Sainton and the Abbé de Vermond were engaged to form the giddy young girl, whose education had been entirely neglected, to play her part, as future queen, at the court of France. Marie Thérèse sacrificed the happiness of all her daughters to her ambitious political views, and very cruelly the lives of two of them to her miserable, narrow-minded bigotry and perverted piety. The devout empress—magnified into a heroine on the strength of the well-known idealized scene that drew from Hungarian gallantry the cry of “*Moriamur pro rege nostro, Maria Theresa*”—when it served her purposes, could be more than complaisant to the mistresses of Louis XV., and instructed her young daughter to adopt the same course; looking forward too confidently to the continued support of Choiseul.

The Baron de Bezenval says of his intimate friend the Duc de Choiseul that he was “prone to the weakness—the worst that a man officially employed can have—of yielding too readily to female influence.” He could be swayed by the whims of his charming little philosophical duchess, as well as by those of other clever women. His sister, the Duchesse de Grammont, had considerable power over him; and it was through her that the Ministère Choiseul, which had so long triumphantly defied all attacks upon it, was finally overthrown. The duchess had set her heart on succeeding to the vacant throne of Madame de Pompadour. The duke had warded off all other aspirants, and had effectually destroyed the hopes of Madame d’Esparbés, who thought to win the favor of the king by displaying for his admiration her very beautiful hands when plucking the stalks from some cherries.

The tribute of admiration was duly paid to the pretty fingers, and to the grace with which they performed their work. Thus encouraged, she continued persistently to pay her *devoirs* to her gracious sovereign, who, as Madame de Genlis informs us—in her account of her presentation at about this time—was still remarkably handsome, and of noble presence; though other reports are less enthusiastic. But it did not suit Choiseul to admit Madame d'Esparbés to share the government with him; so notwithstanding his gallantry, he put an end to her schemes, by unmasking her, as it were, before the *beau monde* at Marly; where the king more frequently sojourned than before the death of Madame de Pompadour. As the duke and several ladies and gentlemen of the court were descending the grand staircase, he tapped Madame d'Esparbés familiarly under the chin, and said aloud, and in a manner understood by all, "Well, little one, how do you succeed?" This *persiflage*, which amused all but the lady herself, he repeated to the king; who was so shocked at her audacious design of making a conquest of him that a *lettre-de-cachet* was immediately issued; and Madame d'Esparbés—informed that she was released from the duty of paying court to his majesty—was ordered to retire to Montauban, the estate of her father, the Marquis de Lussac.

Madame de Grammont attacked the king more insidiously. Louis XV., to a certain extent, had respected the grief of the queen under the family bereavements she had sustained—if but little affected by them himself. In her long illness he seemed concerned and anxious, and visited her often; so far evincing more decency of feeling, and more regard for her, than those great ladies of her court who were intriguing against

each other to obtain the post of *maîtresse-en-titre*, which—not desiring, one may venture to hope, further to distress the queen—he was in no haste to fill up while she lived. They had now no fear of a little *bourgeoise* being again so highly exalted. Choiseul would oppose that, they felt sure; while, further to avert so great a calamity, the highest ladies in the land were patriotically willing to sacrifice themselves to save the honor of France and her king.

The attentions of the duchess were received by Louis with very marked coldness, which, however, chilled not her ardent ambition to become his “guide, philosopher, and friend.” “By means of obstinacy and audacity,” and “a certain fascinating power of domination” which she gave herself credit for possessing, she yet hoped that her praiseworthy efforts would prevail. What, then, was the consternation of this noble lady, and that of all the Roman matrons of the court, when the duke announced to the free-thinkers of Madame de Grammont's atheistical *salon* the re-opening of Madame de Pompadour's apartments! Five years had nearly elapsed since a key had been turned in the locks or the shutters been opened. The rich gilding was found tarnished, and damp and moth had been destructively busy with the heavy velvet draperies, etc. Costly new furniture is ordered, and the apartments are to be splendidly decorated without delay.

But this is not for Madame de Grammont. Most persons present are aware of that, and their furtive glances seem to inquire how she bears it; for they are also aware of her pretensions. But a few days since the king had told her—perhaps with charitable intention of giving her credit for scruples she had not,

though she interpreted it differently—that “he would have no Dame de Maintenon in his court.”

What he needed, he said, was “a *salon* where he could sup and bring together a little company of intimates under the sceptre of a gracious woman; and since Madame de Pompadour he had not found one.” This phœnix, it appears, is found. The duchess discerns plainly the hand of Richelieu in this secret intrigue. Jealousy and intense hate possess her mind, and she demands of her brother more than his accustomed *persiflage*, or mere hostility to this mistress expectant. The death-blow to her hopes must be avenged. Her outraged feelings exact severe retribution.

Forthwith, an infamous parentage; a life of deepest depravity; low habits, and even worse than coarse language, are ascribed to this new mistress of Louis XV.; *maitresse-en-titre* she is not yet. Her presentation, according to the etiquette established and observed by the *Grand Monarque* himself, has not yet taken place; and if Madame de Grammont, aided by a band of pamphleteers and song-writers, can brand her with infamy, it will not. Songs and lampoons and scandalous stories are sung and said and fiddled in every corner of Paris. Crowds gather round to hear them; to mock and laugh, and to hiss the name of their Well-beloved. What is called the “story of her life” is circulated, sold, or given away, just as it happens, in all the most frequented streets and places of public resort. It was on such a foundation as this—the baseness of a high-born dame, disappointed in her hopes of being the mistress of a worn-out libertine king—that the ill-fame of Madame du Barry long rested.

It was surely dishonor enough that a young and



beautiful woman, though not of the privileged class, should fill so disgraceful a position. But the great ladies saw in it only usurpation of an exalted post created for the daughters of illustrious houses.

The day appointed for the installation of the favorite arrived. (The commands of "Louis le Grand" were very precise concerning this ceremony.) She is to be presented to Mesdames, the queen being dead, and her position at court recognized by them. Henceforth she is entitled to recommend to ministers the persons she favors as applicants for office. And her recommendation is to be received as a royal command. She is entitled to expect visits of etiquette from the grantees of the court and foreign ambassadors; to accompany the king on his numerous journeys from palace to palace; to visit all branches of the royal family; in short, to have all the privileges and honors of a queen. Without the presentation she could claim no such distinction; with it she is the first lady in the land. She has France at her feet; and if like Madame de Pompadour, she has tact, she cannot be expelled from the dignified post to which his majesty has raised her.

The hour appointed for the presentation of Madame du Barry by the Duchesse de Mirepoix had passed, and there were no signs yet of her arrival. The king has been accustomed to punctuality, and shows some signs of impatience. If Mesdames dared say what they thought, it would be nothing favorable to this "impertinent *grisette* who has bewitched the king"—as those who know her only from Madame de Grammont's songs and sonnets are accustomed to call her. Lords and ladies exchange very meaning glances. They expect this creature to come rushing in and, in her low *patois* and her ignorance of *les convenances*, horrify the

august circle with an account of some vulgar cause of delay. The old Duc de Richelieu, the Count d'Aiguillon, and others of their party, begin to look serious and to wonder what will be the result of this contre-temps. It is of course by an intrigue of those who desire Choiseul's office that the young girl whose appearance is now by all present so anxiously awaited has been introduced to the king—their intention being to employ her influence to further their own views.

The king, in no excellent humor, is about to postpone the ceremony, when Richelieu, who had withdrawn to ascertain why and wherefore this noble company should be kept so long in suspense, returns, and informs his majesty that Madame du Barry is there, but, having unfortunately arrived so late, she would not enter without permission. His majesty permits. The doors fly open. Enter the grand usher. Numerous attendants. Then the Duchesse de Mirepoix, and by her side, her train borne by a royal page, a vision of youth, beauty, grace, and modesty—the Comtesse du Barry. She is tall, her figure elegant and sylph-like, her complexion brilliantly fair, with a pale rose-bloom on her cheek. And it is not rouge, which, with excellent taste, she never made use of. Her eyes are of a deep violet blue, and she has wavy light-brown hair.\*

She was twenty-three, but appeared much younger. Her modesty and graceful manners particularly struck the courtiers, also the elegant simplicity of her dress; and it was said by one present that, instead of the

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\* Some accounts speak of her "fine dark eyes and rich southern complexion. But Madame Vigée Le Brun, who painted her portrait, should be good authority; and she describes Madame du Barry as above.

king's mistress, and such a mistress as they had looked for, she might have been taken for "a little school-girl who had just come from her first communion." The delay in her arrival was owing to the difficulty the hair-dresser experienced in getting her rebelliously curly hair dressed up to the proper height, and her torture under the operation. The Duchesse de Grammont, who had passed her fortieth year, was infinitely annoyed by the denial—in appearance, at least—so forcibly given to her infamous reports. Her rage was not easily appeased, and the next morning the ears of the young countess were assailed by the disgraceful song "La Belle Bourbonnaise," sung under her windows.

Madame du Barry was *de son siècle*, no doubt, as was Madame de Grammont herself. But there is no proof beyond the infamous songs and stories circulated by the duchess and the people she employed that Madame du Barry was the degraded creature she has been described on this more than doubtful authority. She was extravagant, thoughtless, and believed that the riches of the king were boundless. But her kindness of heart; her thoughtful care of the poor and sick on her estate of Luviciennes, where she was greatly beloved; and her desire to aid Louis XVI. and his queen in their affliction, plead strongly in her favor. The devotion, too, of such a man as the Duc de Cosse-Brissac could hardly have continued for ten years, undiminished, to a woman vulgar and depraved; and lastly, her death, by the guillotine of the monsters of the Terror, should excuse and expiate many a fault.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

The Dauphin and his Brothers.—Arrival of the Bride.—A Timid Young Bridegroom.—Les Fêtes Magiques.—Fête of the City of Paris.—A Terrible Catastrophe.—Lamentation, Mourning, and Woe.—Marie Antoinette.

It is the 14th of April, 1770. The Château de Compiègne is filled with guests—a brilliant assemblage of the great nobles composing the court of Louis XV. The king, with his three young grandsons—the dauphin, the Comte de Provence (afterwards Louis XVIII.), and the Comte d'Artois (Charles X.), arrived at the château on the evening of the 13th, to receive the Austrian Archduchess Marie Antoinette Jeanne Joséphe de Lorraine, the betrothed of the dauphin. The bridegroom elect, a stout, heavy-looking, melancholy boy, wears an air of resigned indifference to his fate that reminds one of his grandfather, when, at the same age, fifteen and a half, his cousin de Bourbon with his mistress, Madame de Prie, married him to Marie Leczinska.

Of the younger brothers, Monsieur (the Comte de Provence) is as thick and ungainly in figure as the dauphin. But there is more expression in his countenance—perhaps he is more intellectual, and possibly a little more crafty. The Comte d'Artois is rather slimly formed, and report credits him with having inherited in a greater degree than either of his brothers

the impetuous, chivalrous, restless, yet tyrannical temperament of the Poles, of which his father exhibited so large a dash in his character. But they are still mere children, and their dispositions and mental faculties but partially developed. The marriages of both these poor boys are, however, arranged to two little sister Princesses of Savoy.

A crowd surrounds the château, and anxious groups are assembled at every town and village along the line of road the young Princess is to pass. In so terribly break-neck a state were these roads that, in case of a mishap to the *cortège* of the royal bride, they have been thoroughly repaired for the especial occasion of her journey. The couriers arrive. There is a grand flourish of trumpets; the king and the dauphin mount their horses, and, with a numerous retinue, ride forth to meet and welcome the future queen of France. Notwithstanding his sixty years, Louis XV. makes a far more gallant knight than the dauphin, who would much prefer to be employed with his last new plaything—a blacksmith's anvil—than in playing the lover to any young lady.

The old state travelling carriage is in sight. Putting spurs to his horse, the king leads the way, and, with his plumed hat in his hand, rides up to the side of the cumbrous vehicle. A lively-looking girl of fourteen and a half years, fresh and fair, but with no beauty of feature or even of figure at that time, returns the king's greeting. Her manner betrays that she has been drilled into the necessity of being very dignified. But something of the hoyden is evident in the inclination, with difficulty restrained—though the solemn eyes of l'Abbé de Vermond are upon her—to burst into laughter at the part she is playing in this

formal scene. Like the "consecration of the Sultana," to quote the expression of a French writer, it is conducted according to the rules of etiquette, prescribed and observed a hundred and ten years before by the great Louis XIV. at the reception of his *fiancée*, Maria Theresa of Spain.

The bridegroom on the present occasion is, however, far more like the boy king Louis XIII., when, being desperately out of temper and naturally frigid, he was obliged to show himself to the good *bourgeois* of Paris by the side of his sparkling, coquettish young bride, Anne of Austria. The lively imagination of the present little archduchess had pictured to itself a far more dashing young husband than the gloomy, timid, fat dauphin. He speaks not a word to her. She glances curiously at him now and then, and generally meets the eyes of the youthful Comte d'Artois. Both of them smile; for there is more sympathy between this boy and her than the others. It was remarked at the time that it was a pity they had not been destined for each other; but it was a still greater pity, as subsequent events too well proved, that the marriages of such children should have taken place at all.

The civil part of the ceremony of the fatal marriage of Marie Antoinette and the dauphin was performed on the 15th, and on the following day the nuptial benediction was given at Versailles by the Archbishop of Paris. A series of *fêtes* followed. And notwithstanding that the exchequer was in its customary chronic state of exhaustion, twenty millions of francs—an almost fabulous sum for that period—were expended upon them. "*Fêtes magiques*," they were termed, from their surpassing in splendor anything

then remembered, or, owing to the greater facilities available, than had probably ever been seen in France. Visitors, noble and royal, flocked from every part of Europe to witness them; while in the provinces many persons who, in those non-travelling days, had never made the journey to Paris took this favorable opportunity of seeing the reported splendor of their capital. These marriage *fêtes* formed an event in the lives of many people—an event deeply impressed on their minds by the terrible catastrophe that terminated them; and which, in after-years, was again brought vividly before them by the tragic death, on the same spot, of the ill-starred pair whom all classes in France were now vying with each other to honor.

Never, perhaps, was more luxury and extravagance openly displayed in Paris by the court, the nobles, the rich *bourgeoisie*, and by many who were not at all rich; or more indignation expressed by those who looked on, unable or unwilling to join in the reckless pursuit of pleasure—so prophetic of evil—then frantically whirling around them. Foreign visitors caught this infection of folly, and sought to outrival the Parisians in splendid entertainments in celebration of the inauspicious event, in the richness of their equipages and expensiveness of toilet.

The public rejoicings had continued for six weeks uninterruptedly. On the 30th of May they were to close with the *fête* of the City of Paris; a banquet and ball; illuminations, and fireworks at night on the Place Louis XV. (now Place de la Concorde), that were to surpass all that had preceded them. Thousands of people assembled in the Place. It was then in course of construction, and with the Rue Royale, also incomplete, surrounded by a scaffolding or hoard-

ing of wood, that closed the openings, except at one corner, and was made to serve as a stand, or support, for the set pieces. Most unfortunately, through some mismanagement, this hoarding took fire, and burnt rapidly. No means were at hand for extinguishing the flames, and there being but one egress for the mass of people that filled this spacious square, instantly, with eager haste, all endeavored to make for it.

Crushing upon each other, hundreds were suffocated by the pressure; those that fell were trampled to death. Groans and screams "arose from earth to heaven in one wild shriek." Frantic cries for help, that none could render. Sounds of agony rent the air, thrilling with painfulest emotion through the breasts of all who, powerless to aid, were witnesses of this fearful scene. Many rushed desperately through the wall of flame that surrounded them as a funeral pyre, and, burnt and bleeding, found a terrible death in the excavations then making for the formation of the Rue Royale. A number of the police scattered among the people in the enclosure perished with them. In the fearful disorder that prevailed, they also, naturally, shared in the mad struggle for life. Nothing, in fact, could be done until the fire had burnt itself out, and the extent of the calamity was ascertained.

Then the dead were separated from the dying; the sufferings of the wounded and burnt attended to in the hospital, and convents, and nearest hôtels. In none, it is said, were sympathy, hospitality, and kind care more freely shown than in the hôtel of the Comtesse du Barry. The youthful couple, greatly distressed at so sad a disaster, gave their first year's



allowance, which had just been paid to them for their *menus plaisirs*, towards mitigating the misery that had fallen on many poor people. Few, indeed, failed to make an offering according to their means for the same charitable purpose.

But money, had it been more abundant and liberally forthcoming, could not avail to soothe to any great extent the wide-spread sorrow and suffering occasioned by this lamentable event. Neither the sufferers nor the survivors were all of the poorer class. Grief, deep and acute, prevailed in many a well-to-do household, from the sudden and terrible form of its bereavements.

The six weeks of frenzied dissipation closing in "lamentation, mourning, and woe," seem to have been, as it were, a foreshadowing of the career of the frivolous, vain, and unfortunate Marie Antoinette; on whose account all these revels took place that were indirectly the cause of the sad catastrophe. In her after-life she was calumniated in her intentions, doubtless, though inexcusable in her conduct; which, worse than thoughtless, deserved censure, justified suspicion, and invited calumny. Some apology may be found for her errors in the earlier period of her life, in her wretched bringing-up, and the trying position she was thrown into, at an age scarcely beyond childhood, that of "the first lady" (the queen being dead) in the gayest and after that of Catherine of Russia, the most dissolute court in Europe.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

Stanislaus Poniatowski.—Madame Geoffrin at Vienna.—L'Autrichienne.—Mesdames the King's Daughters.—“Gros Madame.”—L'Ingénue.—The Court of the Dauphine.—A Marriage on the Tapis.—“Nineveh shall be Overthrown.”—The Candle Extinguished.—“Et Pourtant, il était à Fontenoy!”

WHEN Catherine II. placed Stanislaus Poniatowski on the throne of Poland, he wrote off to Madame Geoffrin, as soon as he was settled in his palace, “Maman, your son is a king. Come and see him.” Poniatowski had been “formed,” for his part, in the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin. He was a philosopher, an admirer of Voltaire, and the friend of his disciples, d'Alembert, Marmontel, and Diderot. Proud of her brilliant pupil, of his many accomplishments and success in society, Madame Geoffrin was accustomed to call him her son. She paid the debts he contracted in Paris, and kept his pockets fairly supplied with loose cash.

That she had much regard for him appeared in the readiness with which she responded to his invitation. For it was her habit to live all the year round in the Rue St. Honoré, where, she said, the air was good and agreed with her, and that the trouble and fatigue of moving about did not. She was then nearly seventy, but, at the bidding of her adopted son, she without delay undertook the then arduous journey to Warsaw. Once fairly on her travels, the great event soon became

known; and Madame Geoffrin, for whose extraordinary celebrity—unless derived from her reputation as “the foster-mother of philosophers”—it is difficult to account, was entreated by the Empresses of Austria and Russia to visit Vienna and St. Petersburg.

Poniatowski received her with almost royal honors; and the magnificence with which the fascinating *roué*—thanks to Russian bayonets—was then surrounded greatly rejoiced the heart of his adopted mother. It was whispered about that Madame Geoffrin had not disdained to be the bearer of some political secret. But whether true or not, she was welcomed by Marie Thérèse with great cordiality, and entertained with much distinction. The wily empress drew from her flattered guest all possible information concerning the court of Versailles and the society of Paris. Her daughters were introduced, and the little Marie Antoinette, then between ten and eleven, greatly attracted Madame Geoffrin.

“Here is a charming little archduchess,” she said, taking the child on her lap. “How I should like to carry her away with me to Paris!”

“Take her, take her,” replied Marie Thérèse, laughingly.

“But I do not choose to go,” exclaimed the child; and, before she could be prevented, she escaped from the room.

When Madame Geoffrin returned, and reopened her *salon*, the account she gave of the incidents of her journey and her visits to foreign courts excited great interest. Soon after it became known that a matrimonial alliance with Austria was on the carpet, and the lady who had seen the future Queen of France was visited and consulted as an oracle. As the an-

swers of oracles are generally reputed to have been, so were those of Madame Geoffrin—vague, yet bearing the most favorable interpretation, and ultimately disappointing the hopes of the inquirer. It was said that Mesdames had privately conferred with her, and that to them she had spoken less vaguely. She had found the court of Vienna dull, to a degree that astonished her; the ceremonious courtesy of French society wanting, and the little archduchess in need of much “forming.”

The king's four spinster daughters, of whom the youngest, Louise Marie (rather deformed, very ill-tempered, but very devout, and who took the veil at this time), was thirty-seven, and the eldest forty-three, possessed immense influence over the dauphin. Madame Adélaïde, who had some superstitious objection to an Austrian princess reigning in France, was the first to use disdainfully the epithet “l'Autrichienne” to designate Marie Antoinette. To her mind it conveyed the idea of the absence of all the fascinations of a Frenchwoman; the utter want of the fine manners which distinguished the polished and *exigeante*, if corrupt, court of France. The slatternly, idle, and ill-behaved German girl was Madame Adélaïde's aversion, and she communicated her feelings to the dauphin, so far as his unimpressionable temperament was capable of receiving them.

Madame Adélaïde had forgotten her own youthful days, when, rough-mannered and boisterous, she might have been mistaken for a boy in petticoats. She scraped away lustily on a violin in those times, climbed trees, jumped over tables and chairs, and went through the soldiers' exercise, as far as she knew it; her great regret being that, as a girl, she

could not "lead the drums for *papa roi*." The king used then to call her his "dragon." She had been on more friendly terms than the rest of the royal family with Madame de Pompadour. She and Madame and the king took their coffee together in the morning; the king, who excelled in such matters, always preparing it himself. Then there was Madame Victoire, who most resembled Louis XV., and whose deep blue eyes, like his own, had been greatly admired. Victoire was the daughter he called "Pig." Madame Sophie ("Raven") was third on the list, and very like Marie Leczinska in features and kindly disposition.

There were yet two other Mesdames, in whom Marie Antoinette found more congenial companions, though a year or two younger than herself. They were the sisters of the dauphin, Madame Clotilde and Madame Elizabeth. The former was so enormously fat that she was familiarly known by the sobriquet of "Gros Madame." When, in 1777, she married the Prince de Piedmont, brother of the two princesses of Savoy, brides of Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois, the following epigram went the round of the *salons*:

"Le bon Savoyard qui reclame  
Le prix de son double présent,  
En échange reçoit Madame,  
C'est le payer bien grasement." \*

One would have thought that when a bagatelle like this could interest and amuse society, more leniency would have been shown to the frivolities and silly re-

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\* "The good Savoyard who demands  
The price of the double gift sent,  
In exchange has Madame on his hands;  
Overpaid thus, he must be content."

marks of a gay-hearted but ill-taught girl. But Marie Antoinette was disliked from the first. That Choiseul who arranged the marriage should, on her arrival, have been in disgrace was a great disadvantage to her. Owing to her cruel and unmerited fate, she has been idealized into a vision of youthful beauty, grace, and goodness. It is certain, however, that her manners were offensive and her temper violent, needing constant rebuke; and that when at Fontainebleau, in 1771, serious thoughts were entertained of seeking a divorce.

Marie Thérèse, so neglectful of essentials in the bringing up of her daughter, had been very careful to instruct her—with reference to Madame du Barry—"that she must take things as they were, and keep on good terms with the comtesse, and, if necessary, flatter her," in order to be successful in her own views—flattering and pleasing Louis XV. Poor Marie Antoinette on arriving at Versailles began to act on this advice. Not having the art, of course, of so experienced a flatterer as the wily empress-queen, she occupied herself with Madame du Barry in a manner that offended both her and the king. The questions she put to Madame de Noailles, and her observations to others—repeated and laughed at until they had gone the round of the court and been considerably amplified on their progress—were not set down to the ingenuousness of an innocent girl. She played remarkably well, it was thought, the rôle of *ingénue*; much better, indeed, than they gave her credit, some years later on, for playing *soubrettes*, and other parts, in which she was so fond of exhibiting herself—acting and singing "royally ill," as those who flattered her most to her face were accustomed to say in her absence.

When, two years after, Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois married the young princesses of Savoy, Marie Antoinette found life more genial and pleasant at Versailles. This party of married boys and girls became very intimate; formed themselves into a society apart; dined and supped in private together, with a small intimate circle of their own, composed of the youngest and most thoughtless of the court. They danced, and sang, and performed plays in secret; defying all the rules of etiquette, and often their revels led to desperate quarrels. The dauphin held himself much aloof from this vivacious coterie, of which the Comte d'Artois and the dauphine were the hero and heroine. Mesdames were horrified; absented themselves from the card-tables, which, as the first lady of the court—a severe mortification to Madame Adélaïde—were now placed in the apartment of the dauphine. Madame, however, set up her own tables, carrying with her Madame de Noailles and all the elder ladies of the court; for they had discovered that they and their etiquette were subjects of jest and laughter in the rackets court of the dauphine.

At about this time Cardinal de Bernis made a journey to Rome, with a view of inducing the Pope to dissolve the marriage of Madame du Barry. Louis XV. had once told Choiseul that he would have no "Dame de Maintenon" at his court. It now appeared that he had changed his mind, and contemplated a morganatic marriage with Madame du Barry. Her husband, Count Guillaume du Barry, had obligingly furthered his views, and a "sentence of separation" was pronounced by the tribunals. But the little fat cardinal failed in his mission to Rome. Not that his holiness was unwilling to yield to the behest of his most

Christian majesty ; but the marriage of Madame du Barry being legally recognized, the Church, it was said, had not the power to dissolve it.

The difficulty, notwithstanding, would probably have been overcome at no distant date, had not the king been attacked by a fatal disease which unexpectedly brought his inglorious career to an end.

On the 27th April, 1774, as Louis XV. was on his road to the hunt in the forest of St. Germain, he and his party came in contact with a funeral procession. The road being narrow, they drew aside to allow it to pass. In reply to inquiries, they were informed that it was the funeral of a young person who had died of the small-pox. The king was supposed to have had this disease in his childhood—a slight eruption, from which he entirely recovered, after an indisposition of a few days, having been mistaken for it. When, therefore, he was taken ill, on the 30th of April, his physicians, having no suspicion of small-pox, at once bled him freely. Continuing to grow worse, and the nature of his disease becoming developed in its most malignant form, precautions were taken for isolating the young princes and princesses, who, with the exception of the dauphine, had not had the small-pox.

In one of the Lenten sermons, two or three weeks before, the Bishop of Senes, M. de Beauvais, had taken for his text, when preaching before the king, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." A stirring discourse, in which Paris and its dissolute society were compared to Nineveh and its inhabitants, and coming retribution foretold, had caught the conscience of the king. He could not get the subject out of his thoughts, and was anxious for the end of these forty Lenten days. Madame du Barry, to whom he com-



municated his fears, was no less so, being extremely superstitious; while the aged libertine, Richelieu, laughed at them both, and endeavored to cheer the king. Two hundred thousand francs were given to the poor and for prayers to Ste. Geneviève, but without avail. Whether or not it be true, as asserted by some French writers, that Louis XV. really regarded the bishop's sermon as prophetic, and having relation to himself, it is singular that on the fortieth day after its delivery he was conveyed to St. Denis for burial; as ignominiously as his predecessor had been near sixty years before. His three daughters, who remained with him in his illness, took the disease, but recovered; though with its disfiguring traces piteous to see. Several of his attendants died; and the lives of two or three priests, whose duty it was to watch by this mass of corruption during the night, were sacrificed also.

The youthful royal family, assembled in a distant apartment, anxiously awaited the signal of death—the extinguishing of a candle in the window of the king's bed-chamber. At last the light disappears. All preparations have been made for departure. The carriage that is to convey them to Choisy stands ready at the entrance—the horses and servants anxious as themselves to set off. They are rather subdued, these six young people, but, on the whole, far from sad; for a lively remark of the Comtesse d'Artois, on the oddness of the manner of their journey, breaks the spell, elicits a hearty laugh from the whole party, and at once there is an end to their mourning.

The body of the king was put in a coffin and covered with lime. The first conveyance at hand was brought forth, and the coffin thrust into it. Twenty

attendants, in their ordinary dress, without sign of mourning, followed with torches, and the procession set out for St. Denis, "at a fast trot," as Bezenval says in his graphic, and probably the most trustworthy, account of the illness and death of Louis XV.

Those who encountered this funeral convoy saluted it with an imprecation or a handful of mud. Not a soul regretted this worthless king. But a veteran soldier shouldered his musket and saluted as the procession passed out of the gates of Versailles, in the dead of the night, on the 13th of May, 1774. "*Et pourtant,*" murmured the old soldier, regretfully, "*il était à Fontenoy!*"

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

The Last Lettre-de-Cachet.—“The Rights of Man.”—“The Crown Chafes.”—The Young King and Queen.—The Queen’s Coiffeur.—Hurrying on to Perdition.—Visits to Luviciennes.—The Duc de Cossé-Brissac.—Voltaire’s Return to Paris.—Voltaire’s Reception.—Death of Lekain.—Les Femmes Philosophes.—France Crowns Voltaire.—Death of Voltaire.—L’Ile des Peupliers.—The End of the Old Régime.

“A FINE reign which begins with a *lettre-de-cachet*!” said Madame du Barry, when, with the politest of bows, the Duc de La Vrillière presented himself at Ruel, whither she had retired at the request of the late king, and handed her the order to repair forthwith to the Abbaye of Pont-aux-Dames. Had she known what was taking place beyond court circles, she would have said “which ends” rather than “which begins.” For La Vrillière, who had grown old at the head of the “Administration des Lettres-de-Cachet,” having “never had the honor,” as Madame de Pompadour said, “of being dismissed from that post”—very shortly after found that his occupation was gone.

He had been in the habit of furnishing those letters to his mistress, Madame de Sabatin, in lieu of the ample sum she needed for pin-money. Any one, therefore, desirous of quietly getting rid of a husband, brother, or father, wife or daughters, had but to make a present to Madame de Sebatin. One of the last—perhaps the very last—*lettre-de-cachet* issued by royal

command was that which recommended the *maîtresse-en-titre* of Louis XV. to seclude herself for awhile in the retreat pointed out to her. The people would submit to no more of these iniquities; and although at times, in the succeeding reign, a refractory noble was invited to reside at his estate, he usually declined the invitation, now that it was not made by letter. France had accepted the oft-repeated saying of Louis XV., "After us the deluge;" accepted it as a consolatory truth, as a guarantee, over and above its own secret resolve, that the state of things then existing under him should come to an end with his reign. The tottering old monarchy and the effete ancient *régime* were therefore buried together in the unhonored tomb of "Louis, le Bien-aimé," and the nation looked forward with hope to the expected reforms of the new reign.

The many startling events of that reign; the impolitic acts of the weak but well-intentioned king; the censurable ones of his thoughtless and frivolous queen, can of course be only referred to, and that in the briefest possible manner, in the few concluding pages of this volume.

The old *régime* was at end; an entire change of scene at hand; and "the rights of man," in the philosophic sense, were about to be loudly asserted. "I see the seeds of a revolution everywhere scattering around me," said Voltaire—"a revolution that will, in due season, unfailingly arrive, though I shall not have the pleasure of witnessing it. There will then be a fine tumult. The young people are lucky indeed; they will see wonderful doings. The French are tardy in all things; but in the end they attain their objects." Such was the situation of affairs and the feeling of the

country when Louis XVI., not yet twenty years of age, utterly ignorant of the routine of government and business of State, and giving no evidence of the possession of qualities for successfully coping with the difficulties of the position he was entering upon, was crowned at Rheims.

The crown being placed rather uncomfortably on his head, "It chafes," he said. Those present who heard his remark were struck by it as an unfavorable omen—for this atheistical and philosophical age was remarkably superstitious. Henri III. had said on a similar occasion, "It pricks." Was there possibly a fate similar to his in reserve for Louis XVI.? Who could tell? Yet the similitude of his remark seemed a pre-sage of evil. On the other hand, hopes were high with a portion of the Parisians. Though hitherto a nullity, whom no one had thought of, what was now reported of his private life and principles was encouraging, and the hopes and expectations of his people were made known to him, as he passed through Paris, by the word "RESURREXIT," placed conspicuously in large characters on the statue of Henri IV. The young king was affected. "Oh! what a grand word!" he exclaimed, with emotion.

With new responsibilities, and positions more prominent and assured, the different characters of the king and his brothers became more fully developed. The incapacity of Louis XVI. was very soon patent to both court and people. "His soul," says Sainte-Beuve, "was unfitted by its very virtues for the rôle of king." He was sincerely pious, truly kind and humane; but there was nothing brilliant or attractive in him, either intellectually or personally. The queen, for some years, though she interfered greatly in affairs of State,

and intrigued to establish her favorites in influential posts, had no influence with the king. He was guided, unfortunately for him, by the Comte de Maurepas, who had been twenty-three years banished from the court, and was recalled, to be the confidential minister of an inexperienced king, at the suggestion of Mesdames. The tastes and pursuits of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI. were wholly dissimilar. He was methodical in his habits, moderate in his expenditure, and his recreations were of the soberest kind. The queen was incapable of giving her mind to any but the most frivolous occupations. She passed her time like a professional actress—her only study, the part she was to sing or play in the afternoon or evening. Or she was rehearsing with the actor Dazincourt, who instructed her in her favorite rôles—the *soubrettes*; or inventing with Mdlle. Guimard new toilets; or head-dresses of the most ridiculous extravagance in height and breadth. Leonard, her hair-dresser, could put from ten to twenty yards of gauze in a lady's head-dress, a damask table-cloth, or—as he once elegantly introduced into a head-dress—a lady's cambric chemise.

Marie Antoinette grew considerably during the four years that elapsed from her marriage to the death of Louis XV. When she came to the throne, she was about the middle height. Her figure had improved, though, from her lounging, careless habits, she had been bandaged and compressed, to prevent one shoulder growing out. Her long neck now carried her head very gracefully, and without being either beautiful or pretty, as her confidential friend, Bezenval, tells us, the expression of her features was agreeable when she was in a good humor. This was not too

often the case, it appears. The quarrels, and scenes of violence, among the youthful royal family are lamentable to read of. The Comtesse de Provence had the intensest dislike to the queen, and her husband shared her feeling.

Her midnight rambles with the Comte d'Artois; their opera balls; their visits to Ramponneau's tea-garden, in the Courtille des Porcherons; the queen's confessed enjoyment of the Shrove Tuesday saturnalia at the latter low place of amusement, as well as the extraordinary indiscretions that gave rise to calumnious reports against her, are all too well known. The letters of the Comte de Mercy d'Argenteau have revealed nothing new; but they have confirmed much that before was deemed doubtful. The affair of the necklace; Beaumarchais' calumny; the sensation created by his "Marriage of Figaro," and the queen's performance of Susanna—all these things, and many similar ones, are also familiar.

While the queen was "hurrying on to perdition," as the empress, her mother, wrote to her, Madame du Barry was holding her court at Luviciennes. She had won golden opinions from the nuns of the Abbaye of Pont-aux-Dames. And when, at the end of a year and a half, she wrote to Maurepas that "if she had ever known any of the secrets of State, she had now entirely forgotten them," he replied that all things should have an end; that she was at liberty to return to Luviciennes, and to visit Paris whenever she pleased. "Her sweetness and grace had been remarkable," he said, "and he was glad she had thought so well of him as to make her application to him." He had also to inform her that the king was pleased to grant her a pension of two thousand crowns.

The pension was certainly unnecessary. Madame du Barry was wealthy. Her château and grounds were a kind of little paradise, and, like the Duc de Choiseul in his exile at Chanteloup, she had always a circle of friends around her. The Duc de Deux-Ponts sent his minister to bid her remember that there was always a safe retreat, with a warm reception awaiting her, in his domains. The King of Sweden, Gustave III., went to her, and made a similar offer, and Joseph II., when in France, spent a whole day at Luviciennes. The gardens are said to have been beautiful. With Madame du Barry on his arm, the emperor visited all the wonders of her little paradise. When she expressed her gratitude for his kind attentions to "a poor recluse," "Madame," he replied, "beauty is always queen, and the whole world her empire."

The romantic devotion of the Duc de Cossé-Brissac—Governor of Paris and colonel of the Cent-gardes du Roi—to Madame du Barry is singular. For ten years, until he fell a victim to the Revolution, he paid her a sort of passionate worship; such as, in the old romances of chivalry, gallant knights were supposed to render to the ladies to whom they had sworn fealty. He had made a will providing for her, and recommending her to the care of his daughter as "one who had been very dear to him." He had foreseen what troubles were coming on France; the probability of his own death, and of distress falling on her; but he had not anticipated, it would seem, that the guillotine would claim her also as its victim. The Duc was beheaded not far from Luviciennes, and his bleeding head thrown into her apartment.

But before the Revolution had deluged France with blood, and when only the first distant mutterings of



the coming storm were heard, the aged philosopher who for sixty years "made unrelenting war against prejudices" was desirous of once again visiting the capital, from which he had for twenty-eight years been banished. In 1777 he had sent his tragedy of "Irene" to the Théâtre Français, and some misconception of the characters on the part of the actors had considerably annoyed him. Patience in such matters was not one of his virtues. He had therefore a further inducement to undertake the journey in his wish to have his tragedy rehearsed under his own eyes. His niece, the Marquise de Villette, recently married at Ferney, but now settled in Paris, urged him also to come and to make her house his home.

Accompanied by Madame Denis, he imprudently left Ferney at the beginning of February, in weather of extremest severity. The greatest attention was paid him on the road, and every precaution taken by the postmasters and others to ensure his safety and comfort. He arrived in Paris on the 10th of February, 1778. He was enveloped in a large loose pelisse of crimson velvet, with a small gold cording at the edges, and deeply bordered with sable. His travelling cap was also of velvet and fur. It was carnival time, and a party of revellers, on the look-out for masks, mistook poor old Voltaire for a carnival reveller, and pursued him for a considerable distance. In spite of fatigue and the inclemency of the weather, he was no sooner out of his carriage than he set off on foot to the residence of his dear angel, Le Comte d'Argental, who returned with him to the house of M. de Villette.

As soon as it was known that Voltaire was in Paris, it occasioned an immense stir and commotion amongst the clergy, the philosophers, and the court; and indeed

amongst persons of all classes. "Voltaire was again among them!" He who had made it the business of his life to uproot what he conceived to be error, whose feelings and opinions, whether absent or present, had a predominating influence in France—his name was on every one's lips, his arrival the one subject of conversation, and all eagerly desired to see him.

He rose at seven on the following morning to receive the Prince de Beauvau and two other academicians deputed to welcome him. The rest of "the forty" soon followed. D'Alembert, La Harpe, and the philosophic brotherhood were also among the first to offer their felicitations to their master and the patriarch of the sect. The French comedians arrived in a body to pay homage to him, and later in the day they rehearsed "Irene" before him, as he lay in bed, whither the fatigue of his early reception at last compelled him to retire. Mdlle. Clairon, in her enthusiasm, fell on her knees before him, he, unfortunately, being now too old and stiff to do, as in such cases he had ever been wont to do.

On the 12th Voltaire was informed of the death of Lekain, and was so much affected by it that he remained for two or three days in strict seclusion. Meanwhile, courtiers, ministers, men of letters, and all persons of distinction in the capital, including many of the clergy, paid visits of congratulation, or made anxious inquiries concerning his health. But he was not received at Versailles, and it was rumored that the Archbishop of Paris had entreated the king to order him to retire from the capital. But the vivacious old poet made light of these marks of disrespect, and astonished his admirers by his gayety and the "prodigious vivacity" of his conversation. The learned Madame

Necker paid her respects to him; also Benjamin Franklin, then in Paris with his nephew, whom he presented to Voltaire and asked his blessing upon him. He replied by exclaiming in English, and in a loud voice (for he was almost delirious with excitement), "Liberty, Tolerance, and Probity!" The young Abbé de Perigord (Talleyrand) also craved the benediction "of him who had freed the nations from the bondage of error." Amongst other celebrities, Madame du Barry is said to have visited him. To her great amusement—having exhausted his *repertoire* of gallant speeches—he addressed her as "*votre divinité*." "The foster-mother of philosophers" was not spared to witness this apotheosis of Voltaire. She had died in the previous year; also Mdlle. de Lespinasse. Only Madame du Deffant still lived; but her *salon* was closed. She was about the same age as Voltaire, but far less vivacious—inhabiting an apartment in the convent of St. Joseph, and while waiting for her summons from this world occasionally turning her thoughts towards another—nothing now being left to this *femme philosophe* and free-thinker but, as she wrote herself, "the dread of eternity."

The sixteenth representation of "Irene" was about to take place. Voltaire, from his exertions in instructing the actors in their parts, had been compelled to keep his bed. Finding himself somewhat better, he determined on witnessing the performance of his play. The theatre was crowded to excess. When he entered the box reserved for him—that of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber—the whole of the audience rose and cheered him vociferously. A cry, "Let him be crowned," was taken up and repeated in all parts of the house. Voltaire bowed his thanks, but would

have declined the proffered honor; nothing of that kind having before been attempted in France. But the audience persisted, exclaiming—as Buzard, who played the High Priest in “Irene,” advanced with a laurel crown—“’Tis the people; ’tis France that sends it.” He then yielded to their wishes.

The tragedy being ended, and while the audience were waiting for the after-piece, the curtain unexpectedly rose, revealing the whole of the company of comedians grouped around the bust of Voltaire elevated on a pedestal in the centre of the stage. Madame Vestris, who had played Irene, then advanced, and recited an ode addressed to the poet, whose name was chanted at certain intervals by the rest of the company, each of whom held a laurel wreath in his hand. The ode ended, the actors and actresses, passing separately before the bust, placed their wreaths upon it, the audience meanwhile applauding with frenzied enthusiasm.

Poor Voltaire, greatly overcome by this scene, was carried almost fainting from the theatre, preceded by an excited throng hailing him as the Sophocles and Homer of France.

Arrived at the hôtel of M. de Villette, the courtyard was found crowded with his friends and people of distinction, to offer their congratulations on his recovery and the triumphal reception he had just met with. Turning towards them, he thanked them in a tone of unusual emotion for the honors heaped upon him, and, he added, “for the glory under which he was about to die.”

It was his last public appearance. He kept his bed for some days, and, being more composed, Madame Denis, his niece, was proposing to return with him to

Ferney. But excitement so continued had brought his feeble frame to the gates of death. He rallied slightly; was feverish and impatient. A large dose of opium threw him into a lethargy. Momentarily he was roused by the news that the name of Lally-Tollendal was freed from the disgrace cast upon it by the ignominious and unjust death he had suffered on the scaffold—a gleam of pleasure passed over his countenance, “I die content,” he said. “I see the king is just.”

His body was embalmed, and conveyed at night to the Convent of Sellières. Before the bishop, who had intended to prevent his burial, could issue his order to that effect the ceremony had been performed. His heart was enclosed in an urn, and placed by M. de Villette in the chamber he had used as his study. The urn bore this inscription—“His heart is here, his spirit everywhere.”

Thus ended the long career of Voltaire—“the man who had dominated his age.”

Rousseau—“the one who had disturbed it”—shortly followed him. In July of the same year—either dying by his own hand or suddenly struck down by apoplexy—Jean-Jacques’ troubles, discontents, and imaginary wrongs were brought to a close at the retreat M. de Girardin had provided him with at Ermenonville. He was buried there on a small island, l’Ile des Peupliers. On the tomb raised to his memory by M. de Girardin was inscribed, “*Ici repose l’homme de la nature et la vérité.*”

Through the summer of 1778 it was the fashion to make the “philosophic pilgrimage” to the tomb of Jean-Jacques. Marie Antoinette visited it; Madame du Barry also—“Le Devin du Village” being per-

formed, on their return, at their private theatres. Later in the year, when Monsieur le Comte de Provence was hunting in the Capitainerie de Chantilly, the hounds pursued the stag to the Ile des Peupliers; and "without, at the time, being aware of it," said Monsieur, "the animal was killed on the tomb of *l'homme de la nature.*"

How the remains of Voltaire and Rousseau were disturbed by the monsters of the Revolution is well known. How liberty degenerated into license, and how Louis XVI. and his queen from weakness to weakness, from folly to folly, too rapidly, and too surely, hurried on to their fate, are facts no less familiar to every one.

Here then we leave them, with feelings of pity and sympathy; for the fate of Louis XVI. was due far more to the despotism and depravity of his predecessors than to political mistakes and faults of his own. Both he and his queen may, in fact, be regarded as the scapegoats of the vices of the Old Régime.

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